

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S DOUBLE TRAP; OR, DOWNING A DANGEROUS GANG. *By AN OLD SCOUT.*



There was a sudden click and then the trap-door opened. Down came the leader of the Dangerous Gang, yelling with fear and astonishment. "I guess we've got you, all right, Captain Danger!" exclaimed Young Wild West.

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YOUNG WILD WEST'S DOUBLE TRAP

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Downing a Dangerous Gang

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CHAPTER I.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND THE DANGEROUS MAN.

"Fatty Bill" had just lighted the three oil lamps that served to give light in his "first-class drinking and gambling saloon," and his customers were pouring in, preparatory to holding a night's revel.

It was pay day at the Ten Spot Mine, and Fatty Bill was thinking of the cash he was going to take in.

That is why he lighted the lamps a little earlier than usual, for oil came pretty high in Glitter Gulch, even if it was only fifty miles from Phoenix.

The mining camp of Glitter Gulch had only been in existence about six months, but in that time it had made rapid strides to the front, for pay dirt was taken out in great quantities, and things were on the boom.

Mule teams carted the ore the fifty miles of rough road to the smelter, and a stage coach made three round trips a week.

Shanties had sprung up like mushrooms, and with them came the gambling and drinking saloon, for without them a mining camp would be like a steamboat without a boiler.

There was one place in the town that was called a tavern, which had quite an air of respectability about it. No game any stronger than "stud poker" was allowed to be played there, and the "tanglefoot" sold over the bar was said to be the best that could be bought in all Arizona.

But everything went at the Coyote, which was the name of Fatty Bill's saloon. There was a faro layout in the big barroom, poker tables and a roulette wheel in the back room, and the worst whisky in Arizona was sold there.

But Fatty Bill was not such a bad fellow, after all. He

had come there to make money, and he was making it without having to "skin" his customers.

If he got twenty-five cents a drink for "tanglefoot" that did not cost him three cents a glass that was fair, for living was high in Glitter Gulch, and he had to make a good profit.

He charged no more than the rest, however, so no one found fault with him.

Among those who entered the saloon after the lamps had been lighted were two boys and a tall man, who was as straight as an arrow.

The three were very striking in appearance, since they all wore fancy hunting suits of buckskin, trimmed with red silk fringe.

They could be easily distinguished from the miners and cowboys, for their costumes were far more expensive than any others to be seen there.

One of the boys was about as dashing and handsome in appearance as one could expect to find in a year's travel.

He was of medium height and build and wore a wealth of light chestnut hair hanging down over his shoulders.

In spite of his youthfulness there was something about him that would lead the close observer to believe that he was every inch a man, when it came to strength, courage and good judgment.

The belt about his shapely waist contained a brace of revolvers and a hunting knife, and he walked with such ease and grace that it was easy to tell that he was a trained athlete.

This boy was no other than the dashing young dead-shot, Young Wild West, who was known pretty well throughout the vast region called the Wild West, loved by his friends and feared and hated by his enemies.

No other hero of the Wild West had made the name for himself that Young Wild West had, and yet he was only a boy!

By always adhering to the right, helping the weak and

administering punishment to the guilty, he had risen head and shoulders above the oldest of the bordermen.

The boy with him was Jim Dart, a young Westerner, like himself, and the tall man was Cheyenne Charlie, an ex-Government scout and Indian fighter.

Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were known far and near as Young Wild West's partners, and so they were, both in his travels and a business way.

Being the owner of several mines and a couple of cattle ranches, our hero could well afford to pursue his favorite hobby, which was to ride about through the wildest portion of the West in search of adventure and what good fortune that might be met with.

At the time of which we write things were in a much wilder state than they now are, though the mining camps in the outlying districts have changed but little.

Law and order was seldom adhered to, for it took too long to get a horse thief before a justice of the peace, and the miners and cowboys generally took the law in their own hands.

Young Wild West and his partners had come over from Phoenix to see what kind of a camp Glitter Gulch was.

With them had come the wife of Cheyenne Charlie and the sweethearts of the boys, and they were now at the tavern.

Young Wild West and his partners had come over from the tavern to take a look at Fatty Bill's, for that appeared to be the kind of place that excitement was to be found in.

Of course, the three attracted considerable attention, for it so happened that there was no one there who had ever seen them.

Neither Young Wild West nor Jim Dart ever drank strong liquors, but the scout sometimes did.

There was little else in the line of a drink to buy in Glitter Gulch, though cigars and tobacco were obtainable.

The three walked up to the long counter that was constructed of rough pine boards and the young deadshot called for three cigars.

The two men behind the counter had started in to do a rushing business, while Fatty Bill stood at the end, ready to lend his assistance when the occasion demanded it.

Our hero paid for the cigars, and then they lighted them, for all smoked occasionally.

There were, perhaps, fifteen men in the barroom, besides our friends, and nearly all of them were miners.

Two or three might have been cowboys or cattlemen, but they were all out for what they termed a good time.

They had money to spend, and the quicker they got rid of it the sooner they would go to work again.

After a while one of the men came from behind the bar and opened up the faro game, the proprietor taking his place in the dispensing of drinks.

It was just about this time that there was a clatter of hoofs outside, and then a voice rang out:

"Clear ther track! I'm comin' through like a forty-horsepower! Wow! Look out, there! If any galoot gits hurt it's his own fault. I'm Captain Danger, an' I'm dangerous! Wow—wow!"

Crack—crack!

Two revolver shots rang out, and then a big, black horse came prancing into the barroom of the saloon, its reckless rider bending low to escape hitting his head against the top of the doorway.

There was a scattering right and left to get out of the way, for no one there cared to be trampled by the horse.

"Whoa, Black Diamond!" yelled the rider, as he made the steed come to a halt with his breast against the bar. "Trot out some bugjuice, you lazy galoots! I'm dry, an' so is my horse. He's got more sense than I have, though, an' he wants a pail of water. Trot it out, or I'll break up every bottle you've got behind ther bar!"

The man had a revolver in his right hand, and, quickly placing the bridle rein between his teeth, he drew another with his left hand.

"There!" he exclaimed, as he flashed a glance around the room. "Who says I ain't a dangerous man?"

No one made a word of reply.

It was evident that the majority of those present knew him, and that they really regarded him as a dangerous man.

"You kin have jest what yer want in a jiffy, Dan," Fatty said, nervously. "Don't go ter shootin' out ther lights, 'cause I ain't got another chimney in ther place. Here's ther best whisky in ther house fur you, an' Black Diamond will have a pail of as clean water as ever run down a hill."

With surprising quickness, the man behind the bar with him ran out and got a pail of water.

It was placed on the counter before the horse, which, without loss of time, thrust his nose in it and began to drink.

Then Captain Danger raised his glass to his lips and swallowed the whisky that had been poured out for him.

"How much, Fatty?" he asked.

"Not a cent, Dan," was the reply. "Ther drinks fur you an' your horse is on me."

"That's ther way ter talk, Fatty! You're ther whitest saloon keeper in all Arizony. Here! Give ther boys a drink on me, an' keep ther change. I'm flush to-night. Wow!"

He tossed a gold piece on the bar and the saloon keeper deftly caught it as it was rolling off.

The face of Fatty Bill wore a smile now.

The dangerous man was flush, and that meant that more would be added to his coffers than he had expected that night.

"Come up, everybody!" called out Captain Danger. "I'll shoot ther galoot that refuses ter take his whisky straight with me!"

They all rushed up save Young Wild West and his partners.

Charlie would have taken a drink with the man, but he knew that Wild and Jim would refuse, so he stayed by them.

There was trouble ahead, and he knew it, as well as they did.

The horse was through drinking by this time, and,

wheeling him around, Captain Danger looked at the three, who remained in the background.

They were all calmly smoking the cigars they had lighted a few minutes before, and our hero really looked as though there was nothing that could possibly disturb him.

"Why don't you fancy-lookin' galoots step up an' git your liquor?" the dangerous man asked, showing no little surprise.

"Well, my friend," answered Wild, coolly, "I don't drink whisky, so I will have to decline your invitation. If you insist on treating us I will take a cigar with you."

"You will take straight whisky, or die!"

The words came out like a burst of thunder, for Captain Danger had a way of frightening people when he roared out.

But Young Wild West never flinched.

His hand had dropped toward the holster at his right side as he answered the man, however, and the next thing Captain Danger knew a revolver was leveled at his breast.

"I'm not going to die just yet," said Wild, speaking as though it was all of little consequence to him. "I reckon you better take that back. You have got to take it back, in fact!"

"Wha—what!" cried the horseman, in a much milder tone of voice. "What have I run up against?"

"See here, Captain Danger, as you call yourself, I don't know you from a side of sole leather, and I don't care how dangerous you are, either. But I am not going to take a drink of whisky with you, or any one else. This is a free country, and a person can do as they please about drinking."

"They kin, eh?"

The hand that held the revolver pointed at him was as steady as a rock.

The calm smile on the boy's face made the big ruffian feel uneasy, too. There was no doubt but that he had faced the muzzle of a revolver before, but never under such circumstances as these.

"Put up your shooter, boy. You win the first trick in ther game," he said. "I'm a dangerous man, but I ain't a fool. I don't want ter die jest yet, not by a jugful. Fatty, give the boy an' his friends jest what they want."

Then he turned and rode out of the saloon.

But our hero knew very well that he would come back again, so he quietly stepped up to the bar and accepted the cigar the proprietor put out for him, keeping his eye on the door at the same time.

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN DANGER SHOWS HIS HAND.

Captain Danger came back into the place very quickly.

There was a smile on his face, but it was no doubt a forced one, for no man who had been called as hard as he had just been would feel like smiling.

Cheyenne Charlie glared at him, showing how much he would like to have a chance with him. But Young Wild West simply looked indifferent.

Jim Dart kept his eyes open, ready to prevent a treacherous movement on the part of the so-called dangerous man.

"Has everybody had a drink—or what they wanted, Fatty?" Captain Danger asked.

"Yes, Cap," was the reply.

"Well, keep ther change, as I said afore. I'm flush to-night."

Then he turned slowly and fixed his gaze upon our hero.

He sized him up carefully, and then said:

"I'd jest like to know who you are, boy."

"Well, I'll tell you, then. I am Young Wild West," was the quick reply.

The villain—for such he was, beyond the shadow of a doubt—gave a start.

"So you are Young Wild West, eh?" he observed, after a pause.

"That's who I happen to be."

"You're ther champion deadshot of the West, I believe?"

"Well, I don't know about that. I have managed to beat all I have tackled at shooting. But that don't say that there are not others who can do as well as I can with a rifle or revolver. I am always ready to let them try it."

"An' a good many calls yer ther Prince of ther Saddle?" went on the man, questioningly, not paying any attention to what the boy said.

"Yes, some call me that," Wild answered, coolly.

"It's because you can handle any kind of a horse you come across, an' kin ride easier an' better than any galoot in ther West, ain't it?" queried Captain Danger.

"Well, never mind what it is for. If I am called the Prince of the Saddle it is not because I asked any one to call it to me. Now, then, I'll ask you a question or two. You are Captain Danger?"

"Yes; that's me."

"And you are a dangerous man?"

"Yes, an' I'm ther boss of a dangerous gang, too."

"Ah! I see."

"That's me, Young Wild West. I've heard lots about you an' yer pards, an' ther gals what go ridin' 'round ther country with you. I've heard that you're always lookin' fur trouble, an' that a renegade or bad Injun don't stand much show with yer. Is that so?"

"Well, I don't go around looking for trouble, as you say. But if anybody interferes with me I generally take my part. You ought to know that much."

"I do. But, say! You was smart enough ter git ther drop on me jest now, an' I was sensible enough ter give in. Now, s'pose we go outside an' find out who is ther best shot?"

"All right. Nothing would suit me better, for I am satisfied that you are one of the sort who would not hesitate to give it to a fellow from behind, and the quicker such galoots as you are out of the world the better it will be for those who have been forced to come in contact with you. Come right along, Captain Danger."

Wild started for the door, just as though there was nothing that was the least bit perilous about it.

Captain Danger turned slightly pale.

"By ginger! But you're a good one, all right!" he exclaimed.

"Aren't you coming out?" asked Wild, looking surprised, though he was not.

"No. I only said that jest ter find out what kind of stuffs you're made of, Young Wild West. I know you're all right now. Fatty, give us another drink. Let Young Wild West and his pards have what they like. I know a game man when I see him, an' when I meet a boy what is as game as he is it makes me feel like 'treatin'."

Fatty was much pleased, and he hastened to fill the order.

"Keep the change, Fatty," and the villain threw another gold piece on the bar.

Wild knew the man was simply waiting to get a chance at him, and he waited for the next move in the game.

It was soon made.

"Young Wild West, I made a mistake in threatening to shoot all those who refused to take whisky straight with me," Captain Danger remarked, as he put down his glass and looked at the boy, curiously.

"I reckon you did," was the reply.

"Of course, I didn't think that there was any one here who would refuse. If I had known that you was goin' to refuse I would have said that I was goin' ter pick up ther galoot what wouldn't take liquor with me an' throw him out of ther barroom."

"Well, I don't think it would have made any difference to me if you had made that threat."

"Yer don't?"

"No. I am not in the habit of being thrown out of a place, and I am quite certain that no sneaking coyote like you could do the job."

"You mean to say that I couldn't pick you up and throw you out of here?"

The dangerous man looked surprised when he asked the question.

"That is just what I mean. I wouldn't allow a man twice as big as you to do that. As I just said, I am not in the habit of being thrown out of places. I am only a boy, I know, but I have learned a few things since I have been going around, and I never yet met the galoot, big or little, who could throw me out of a place. You are a big man, and a powerful one, if looks count for anything, but you couldn't throw me out of this barroom, because I wouldn't let you."

"I s'pose you'd jerk out that handy gun of yours an' drop me if I tried it?"

"Oh, no; I wouldn't. If you tried to pick me up and throw me out I would try and turn the tables on you. I reckon you would go out, and not me."

Captain Danger acted as though he could scarcely believe his own ears.

The young deadshot was as cool as an iceberg just then.

He was quick as a flash, strong as a young lion and not afraid of anything, and, with the confidence he possessed to back him, he was ready to tackle the man, or any one else in the place, for that matter.

Wild knew that few of the rough-and-ready men of the West knew anything about wrestling or boxing, from a scientific standpoint.

He did know a whole lot about it, for he had taken pains to learn.

There was no doubt in his mind that the villain could pick him up and throw him out, providing he got the right hold upon him.

But Wild did not mean to let him get that hold.

He thought it would do Captain Danger good if he showed him that he was mistaken in his estimate of what he could do.

"Suppose you try to pick me up and throw me out?" he suggested.

"Blame if I don't do it, since you seem to want it so bad!"

The dangerous man took his weapons from his belt and laid them on the bar.

"That shows you that I mean to do the thing in a square way—no shooters or knives to be used," he said, pointing to the weapons.

"All right."

Then Wild handed his own weapons to his partners and stepped to the middle of the room.

"All's I want is that I have clear sailin' fur ther door," said Captain Danger, as he rolled up his sleeves. "I hate ter chuck a mere boy out, but it has got ter be done."

A faint smile curled about the lips of our hero.

"Just say when you're ready," he observed.

"I'm comin' fur you now!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the villain made a leap for the boy.

Then something happened that almost took the breath away from the spectators.

Young Wild West stepped nimbly aside, threw out his left foot and slid his right arm under the chin of the dangerous man.

His left hand caught him somewhere about one of his knees, and then up went his heels straight for the ceiling.

But instead of allowing him to drop to the floor, as he might have done if it had been a wrestling bout, Wild got his head and shoulders under his back and started for the door.

It was all done in a twinkling, and before the miners and other spectators knew just how it happened Captain Danger lay sprawling on the ground in front of the saloon.

"There you are!" exclaimed the young deadshot. "I hope you are satisfied. If you are not I'll do it again. You couldn't even pick me up, let alone throw me out."

"Hooray fur Young Wild West!" shouted Cheyenne Charlie, swinging his hat over his head.

Then almost everybody in the saloon broke into a prolonged cheer.

They had seen enough to convince them that the boy was no ordinary one.

Almost every one admires feats of strength and skill, and these men were no exceptions to the rule.

Before they could all get out of the saloon, however, Captain Danger got upon his feet and started inside.

Room was made for him to get in, Wild taking his position in the middle of the room again.

"Are you going to try it again?" the young deadshot asked, coolly.

"Not by a jugful!" was the reply. "But I'll show yer that no galoot kin chuck me out of a saloon, an' live five minutes afterward!"

As he spoke he grabbed a revolver from the belt of the man nearest him and turned it upon Wild.

It was not his weapon that spoke, but one of Cheyenne Charlie's, and the shooter dropped to the floor.

CHAPTER III.

WILD SETTLES SOME DOUBTS.

Cheyenne Charlie had fired to hit the revolver, and not the man's hand.

It was an old trick of Young Wild West's, and the scout had taken to it quite well.

The weapon had been knocked from the hand of Captain Danger without drawing a speck of blood.

"That's the way to do it, Charlie!" exclaimed the young deadshot. "The galoot meant to kill me, and he deserved to be shot. But I am glad you let him live. He will probably try to make it interesting for us, and excitement is what we want, you know."

Wild was as cool as though nothing out of the ordinary had taken place.

Crestfallen and defeated, Captain Danger stood stock still, his eyes turned upon his revolver, which lay on the floor within a few feet of him.

The men in the saloon had seen the treacherous act of the villain, and they looked at him angrily now.

The dangerous man surely did not look to be so very dangerous now!

On the other hand, he looked pretty meek.

"Gentlemen," said Wild, addressing the crowd, "you all know what that big galoot tried to do, and you know what happened to him. We will leave him to you, for we have got to go over to the tavern, where our friends are awaiting us. It isn't likely that Captain Danger will try to shoot any of you, as he knows you too well. But the next time he pulls a shooter on me, or my partners, you can bet he will go down to stay! Good evening, all!"

The boy turned and walked out of the saloon, as coolly as he would have done if there had been no trouble.

Charlie and Jim followed him, keeping their eyes on the dangerous man until they got outside.

With a hearty "Good night!" from the inmates of the place ringing in their ears, the three walked over to the tavern.

They thought they had seen about enough of Glitter Gulch for the time being, and thinking they might be able to learn something about Captain Danger at the tavern, they went in the barroom, before seeking the company of the girls, as they always called their female companions, even though the scout's wife was a young woman.

There were quite a few miners in the barroom when they entered, and the proprietor was doing quite a business.

Several of the men nodded to our friends, for they had seen them before supper, and they had heard who they were.

"Boys," said Wild, casting a glance around, "what kind of a galoot is Captain Danger?"

"He's a bad one, I reckon," answered one of the miners, shaking his head. "He runs ther camp whenever he takes a notion."

"He does, eh? Well, he tried to run me a little while ago, but he got much the worst of it. Then he tried to let me have a bullet, and Cheyenne Charlie here shot his shooter from his hand. I just thought I would ask about the galoot. So he's a bad one, eh?"

"Yes, he's ther leader of a dangerous gang that's located in ther camp, Young Wild West," the proprietor spoke up. "The gang has got a mighty bad name. There's dark things said about 'em, though nothin' has been proved ag'in 'em, as I knows of."

"A dangerous gang, eh? Where do they hang out, as a rule?"

"Oh, they ain't got no particular place, that I knows of. Sometimes they ain't around fur a day or two, an' then they'll be around fur a week on a stretch. Some of 'em has got claims, an' they do a little work now an' then."

"About how many are there in this dangerous gang?" our hero asked, for he was getting more interested every minte.

"Eight or nine, all told, I reckon."

"Well, that isn't so many."

"Oh, it ain't so many, but when they all git together an' start to run things they ginerally do it."

"And you people let them run things, then?"

"Well, so long as they don't interfere much with us, what's ther use of interferin' with them?"

"That is very true. But I don't see how a gang of men can run things their way without interfering with somebody's business. But it makes no difference to me about that part of it. We propose to stay in Glitter Gulch for two or three days, and if Captain Danger and his gang lets us alone we will let them alone. I rather think the captain will be trying to down us, though, me especially. He don't like what I did to him a little while ago, over in the Coyote saloon."

"What did yer do ter him?" asked one of the loiterers.

"Well, we had a few words because I wouldn't drink whisky when he treated. He threatened to shoot any one who wouldn't drink whisky straight. We wouldn't do it. Jim Dart and I don't drink whisky, anyhow, and there has never been a galoot to make us do it. When Captain Danger pulled his gun to shoot me, because I refused his invitation, I got the drop on him and made him change his mind. After that he undertook to throw me out of the place, and I wouldn't let him do it."

"Yer wouldn't let him? Why, how is that?"

"Well, I never let any one do a thing like that. You see, I am not used to being picked up and tossed about. I don't know how it feels to be treated that way, and I don't mean to learn, either. I just let him come for me, and then I surprised him."

"What did yer do?" asked the landlord.

"Well, I picked him up and threw him out."

"Yer did?"

"That's jest what he done!" spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "Wild's only a boy, but I'll bet a hundred ter fifty that there ain't a man here what he can't chuck out-doors!"

Some of them seemed to have their doubts about this, by the way they exchanged glances.

But they had been talking about the young deadshot before our friends came in, and they had heard enough about him to believe that he was a little above the ordinary run of boys.

However, one of them, who appeared to be a good-natured, honest man, looked at the scout and nodded.

"I'll have ter take that bet," he said, and then he pulled his wallet out of his pocket.

"All right; I won't back down," the scout replied.

"See here!" spoke up Wild. "I don't want to make enemies of honest men. I think you are one of that kind, my friend, and if I should throw you out of the barroom you would have it in for me afterward. Then there would be trouble."

"Oh, no," was the quick reply. "I ain't that kind of a man. I'm somewhat of a wrestler, an' when I finds that somebody is better than me I'm always willin' ter shake hands an' admit it. I wouldn't git mad if yer chucked me out. I hope yer won't let me drop too hard, though."

Then he laughed in a hearty way.

"Well, since Charlie offered to make the bet, I'll try you. He is betting you a hundred dollars to fifty that I will throw you out of the barroom. Is that it?"

"That's it! An' I'm bettin' that yer won't do it."

"All right. Get yourself in shape. If you get mad I can't help it."

"I won't git mad. Don't think anything like that."

The miner pulled up his sleeves, handed his weapons to a friend, and then he got in the middle of the room.

"I reckon I'd better put up ther money first," he said, as he counted out fifty dollars.

"I'll take your word fur it, if you'll take mine," answered the scout.

"All right, then. If Young Wild West chucks me out of here I owe you fifty dollars, an' if he don't you owe me a hundred."

"That's it, exactly."

"Good! Come on, Young Wild West!"

Wild had got ready pretty quickly.

He made a rush for the man, who tried to dodge.

He dodged just the way the boy wanted him to, and before he knew how it happened Wild had him.

Up in the air he went, the small of his back resting on the top of our hero's head, rendering him powerless to do anything but to kick and try to keep from falling back on his head.

Out went Wild, and with a thud the miner came down upon his feet on the ground.

"That was easy enough, I reckon," said the young deadshot, as he came back, smiling. "He wasn't as bad to handle as Captain Danger."

The miner came back in a minute, looking rather sheepish.

"I reckon I owe you fifty dollars," he said to Charlie. "I've made a fool of myself, but I ain't no squealer. Here's your money."

"See here!" exclaimed the scout. "I reckon I'll let you down a little easier than that. You treat ther crowd an' we'll call it square. I was bettin' on a sure thing, anyhow. Why, yer never had a ghost of a chance! Did yer see how easy it was done?"

"No, I didn't see. I felt myself goin', I know, an' all I was afraid of was that he'd drop me an' let me fall on my head. I was out in a jiffy, all right!"

Then he turned and put out his hand to Wild.

"I told yer I wouldn't git mad, an' I ain't. But I didn't think yer could do it, though. Hooray fur Young Wild West, boys!"

The cheers were given with a will, for there was not a man present who was not a friend of the young deadshot at that minute.

The defeated miner stood treat, and then our friends remained in the barroom a few minutes and went to find the girls.

Young Wild West had about satisfied the majority of the miners in Glitter Gulch that he was all they had heard he was.

Before he left the camp he was going to make the dangerous gang think the same way.

CHAPTER IV.

HOP WAH, THE CLEVER CHINAMAN.

Charming Arietta Murdock, the pretty, golden-haired sweetheart of Young Wild West, met him as he came into the rather cosy sitting room of the tavern.

Arietta was a true girl of the Wild West, having been born and reared in Wyoming during a period when the redskins were creating ruin and havoc in that region.

She could ride a horse and shoot as well as the average man of the plains, and her courage and coolness put her to the fore as a dangerous enemy for one to have.

The girl had been taught much by her dashing young lover, and she, in turn, had taught Eloise Gardner, the sweetheart of Jim Dart, and Anna, the wife of Cheyenne Charlie, who had not been in the West over two or three years, a great deal about shooting.

All three of the girls showed their pleasure when Wild and his partners came in.

"Well, what have you been up to since you went out to look around?" Arietta asked.

"Oh, we met the leader of a dangerous gang, and we had to show him a thing or two, Et," answered our hero, with a smile.

"That is just like you. In trouble already, I suppose?"

"Well, I don't know how much trouble we are in, but I suppose we have an enemy here in the camp. But that makes no difference; if we had no enemies things would

go along altogether too smooth. We can't live without excitement, you know."

"You couldn't, I really believe," spoke up the scout's wife, a twinkle in her eyes.

"Well, Charlie is about the same way, I reckon."

"Yes, and it is you who have made him so."

"Is that so, Charlie?" and the young deadshot turned and smiled at the scout.

"I reckon it's somethin' that way," was the retort. "An' it's ther same way with Jim, too. I reckon ther gals is putty much that way themselves."

"Oh, we have learned to love leading an outdoor life the most of the time," Anna declared.

"Well, in doing that we are bound to run into danger now and then," Arietta hastened to say.

"Just now we are living in a house, and still I suppose we are in danger," Eloise remarked.

"Sleeping under a roof half a dozen nights in a month won't hurt you any," Wild laughingly remarked. "It isn't every mining camp that has a tavern that's fit to stop at. Then we camp just the same, and we find it all right, too."

While they were talking the landlord's wife came into the room, showing that she was anxious about something.

"There's something ther matter with one of your Chinamen," she said.

Charlie looked at his companions and grinned.

"It's Hop, of course," he remarked. "That heathen galoot is always up ter somethin'."

Young Wild West always took two Chinese servants with him on his trips, especially when the girls accompanied them.

They were brothers, and bore the names of Hop Wah and Wing Wah.

The latter was the cook, and a very good one he was, too.

Outside of this he was only a plain, simple-minded fellow, who liked to sleep a great deal, was honest and always minded his own business.

Hop was just as simple in looks as he, if not more so. But that was as far as it went, for he really was a very clever fellow.

He was a professional card sharp, a sleight-of-hand performer, a lover of practical joking and very fond of whisky, which he invariably called "tanglefoot."

Added to these accomplishments—if they all could be called accomplishments—he could tell an untruth as quickly as he could the truth, except when matters were serious.

In the latter case he had proven himself a great help to our friends, and consequently he was thought a great deal of by all hands.

As he was continually looking for victims, either to have fun with or to fleece in some gambling game, it was no wonder that the scout said it was Hop, when the mistress of the tavern came in and reported that there was something the matter with one of their Chinamen.

Wild nodded to the scout, who promptly went with the woman.

There was a little building about ten feet in the rear of the house, where the washing was done for the tavern,

and in which slept the colored man and his wife, who were the hired help.

It was here where the trouble was.

As Charlie stalked into the building he found the darky and his wife sitting there with Wing, who was smiling and nodding, as only a "heathen Chineese" can.

"Where is Hop, Wing?" the scout asked.

"He play allee samee lillee tlick," was the reply. "He comee back velly soonee, so be. Um blackee man and um woman no undelstand; makee muchee 'flaid, so be. Allee samee calle um missee pletty quicke."

"Whattée mattee?"

The voice came from behind Charlie, and then Hop pushed his way into the shanty and bowed to the frightened couple, who had called upon the mistress.

"Why, heah he is!" cried the colored woman, looking amazed. "He done stand by de fireplace little while ago, an' all of a sudden he catch afire an' go up de chimney in smoke. He done call out from de chimney dat he was goin' up to de sky, fo' suah!"

"Lat light," spoke up the clever Chinaman, rubbing his hands and smiling blandly. "Me allee samee go uppee chimney to um sky; len me comee backee and walkee in um door. Me no comee down um chimney; makee lillee mistakee, so be."

Charlie knew quite well what he had been up to.

Hop had been playing his wonderful disappearance trick, which was done by his setting some peculiar kind of powder on fire, and then sneaking off while a cloud of smoke went up to conceal his movements.

Being a ventriloquist, he could easily fool an ordinary person and make them believe he was somewhere else.

This trick was altogether too much for the two darkies.

"Whatever is it all about, anyway?" asked the mistress, as she looked at them all in a puzzled way.

Young Wild West came out just then.

He had been standing near enough to hear Hop's explanation, and he thought he had better make it somewhat clear to the woman and her servants.

He soon made them partly understand, though they all had an idea that the Chinaman was a little bit more than human.

Hop was just in the humor to let himself go a little, for he had been treated to tanglefoot by the darky, and he was getting a little reckless.

He quietly slipped out of the little shanty and made his way to the barroom of the tavern.

Things were going in full blast there, and Hop looked at the two tables, where draw poker was in progress, and nodded.

"Me likee play lillee game," he remarked to a man who stood near him.

"Yer would?" came the reply. "S'pose we go over ter my shanty an' have a game? I kin git a couple of more. But have yer got any money?"

"Me gottee allee samee huddled dollee," and Hop quickly showed at least that much.

The man's eyes sparkled, as did those of one standing near him.

There was really no chance to get in a game there, as the tables each had five players around them.

Hop never thought but that the man who had proposed to go to his shanty and play was anything more than an ordinary miner, who was pretty honest in his ways, and fond of playing draw poker.

But the fact was that the fellow was one of the dangerous gang, of which Captain Danger was the leader.

The villain had heard considerable about Young Wild West and his partners, and also of the two Chinese servants who traveled with them.

One of the members of the gang had met them, and knew all about them.

That was why the fellow was so willing to get Hop to go to his shanty.

He wanted to fleece him.

The fellow near him was a member of the gang, too, and he at once signified his willingness to join in the game.

Hop looked them over and came to the conclusion right away that they meant to get his money from him.

But he was ready to let them try, for he depended on his cleverness to get the best of them.

"You havee lille tanglefoot to dlink when we play?" he asked, innocently.

"You kin bet yer life we will!" was the reply. "I've got plenty of it over in ther shanty. Come on!"

Hop went out like a lamb going to the slaughter.

That is what the two members of the dangerous gang thought, anyway.

The shanty was not far distant. It was a little back of the crooked line in which the others were built on that side of the single street, and there was a thick growth of stunted trees and bushes right behind it.

The Chinaman took in all this as he approached it.

When he was ushered inside he found two men already there.

One of them was Captain Danger.

The shanty was really one that was used as a sort of headquarters by the dangerous gang, and he had come over to have a talk with some of his followers in regard to getting square with Young Wild West and his partners.

"Hello, Rolly!" the captain exclaimed, as the three came in. "What have yer got there?"

"One of Young Wild West's Chineee galoots," was the reply.

CHAPTER V.

THE DRAW POKER GAME.

Hop smiled blandly at the men in the shanty.

But he realized right away that he had ventured in among the enemies of Young Wild West.

Though he knew nothing of what had taken place in the saloon, it was easy for him to guess that the four men were down on his young boss.

But he never let on that he thought anything, and as the two in the shanty looked him over he smiled all the more, and tried to make himself look as pleasant as possible.

"What did yer bring ther heathen here fur?" Captain Danger asked, as though he did not think it was much of a trick for his men to do.

"He wanted ter play a little game of draw poker, cap. I thought this would be ther best place ter do it. It is out of ther way of everything, yer know."

"Draw poker, eh?"

"Yes; I heard one of ther boys say that he was a putty good one at it, too."

"Has he got any money?"

"Me gottee lillee more lan um hunded dollee," spoke up Hop, and he quickly showed a handful of money.

The eyes of the leader of the Dangerous Gang brightened.

He now understood why the Chinaman had been brought to the shanty.

"So he's s'posed ter be a good one at poker, eh, Rolly?" the villain asked.

"Yes; a mighty smart Chinee, he's said ter be, cap."

"Maybe he's somethin' like his boss?"

"Me allee samee likee Young Wild West," Hop hastened to say. "Me shootee allee samee velly muchee stlaight."

The fact was that the Celestial could not hit a bear with a shot gun at ten yards; but he thought it best to make out that he was the genuine article, when it came to shooting.

But what he lacked in marksmanship he made up in other things.

Though he felt that he was with four men, who would do their utmost to take what money he had from him, he was not a bit alarmed.

Hop had a few articles in his capacious pockets that would enable him to get through all right, providing he had half a chance.

But we will see how he made out presently.

There was not much of a light in the shanty, since there was but one smoky lantern in it.

This was hung from one of the low rafters, so it shed what little light it could directly on a roughly made table.

The man called Rolly, who had invited Hop there, wiped off the globe of the lantern on his shirt sleeve, but it made little difference, though the Chinaman nodded, as though he thought it did.

"Set down," he says. "I heard tell of your name, but I've forgot it. I s'pose it's Sing Song, or some other sich name?"

"Me name Hop Wah; come flom China; go to 'Flisco Sunday School, and cookee for miner. Havee velly hardee time, but me do um best; len me go to workee for um Young Wild West."

Hop rattled this off as though it came out without any thinking.

But the fact was that he felt in a rhyming mood just then, and he got it out with ease.

Captain Danger laughed at this.

"You're a sort of a song writer, I reckon," he observed.

"Me velly muchee smartee Chinee," Hop answered, as though he did not know whether he ought to let it be

known or not. "Me gottee uncle in China whatee velly muchee smartee; me allee samee likee my uncle in China."

"Git out the cards," suggested one of the men, who seemed anxious to git his share of the money the "heathen Chinees" had shown them.

"Me gottee cards, so be," and with that Hop produced a deck that was near new.

"Carries 'em right with him, I see," remarked Rolly, winking at the three men.

"Yes; he's right up ter snuff," answered the captain.

Hop smiled in his simple, innocent way.

Then he shuffled the cards in a way that told that he had been there before.

Sometimes he acted the part of an innocent, but he knew that the villains were pretty sure that he was a good hand at it, so he proceeded accordingly.

They all took their places, and when the cards were laid down they cut for deal.

The fellow called Rolly won the deal.

Hop was the second player on the left from him.

The ante put up was a dollar.

"Me makee lille blind for fivee dollee more," said the Chinaman, as the deal began.

He put down the money and the rest nodded, as though that kind of playing just suited them.

By going it "blind" meant that Hop was not to look at his cards until the draw was to be made.

He allowed them to lay, and when the rest decided to come in, and put up the money, he picked them up and looked them over.

He was not surprised when he found that he had three aces cold.

Rolly was quite a clever dealer, and he had fixed things pretty well.

The man next to Hop drew three cards.

It was to be expected that Hop would take two cards, holding the three aces to draw to.

But Captain Danger was next to him, and somehow the clever Celestial got it in his head that he was to be the one to hold the winning hand.

If such was the case he was to draw cards that would fill his hand.

The Chinaman did not care who won the first hand, anyhow, so, acting on a thought, he threw down his hand and said:

"Me takee allee samee fivee cards."

Rolly was staggered.

He looked at the captain and then at the rest of the men.

"Yer want a book, eh?" he queried, as though he thought the Chinaman had made a mistake.

"Yes, me wantee fivee cards; me no gottee pair."

"All right, then."

The rascally fellow then undertook to slide the cards from the bottom of the deck.

"You allee samee makee lillee mistake, so be," said Hop, calmly, as he placed his fingers on the man's hand.

"Me likee um cards flom um top, so be."

"There ain't no use in tryin' ter fool ther heathen, Rolly," said Captain Danger, winking. "Give him his cards."

"Me no cheatee, and me no likee anybody cheatee," observed Hop. "Me findee somebody whatee cheatee me shootee, allee samee Young Wild West!"

Again the villains looked at each other.

They did not know just what to make of the Chinaman who had been brought there to be relieved of what money he had.

He spoke in such an easy way that there was nothing like a threat in what he said.

Still, he had said that if any one cheated he would shoot, the same as Young Wild West would do.

Hop grinned some more.

"Me velly muchee smartee, so be," he observed.

Then Rolly gave him five cards from the top of the pack.

He looked at them casually and then kept them face down to the table.

He had drawn three kings and a pair of queens.

As the dealer got ready to give the captain his cards Hop suddenly put his hand on the deck and exclaimed:

"Me bettee hundled dollee me tellee whatee um top card is!"

"I'll take that bet," answered Captain Danger, not noticing the warning look Rolly gave him.

He counted out the money and Hop quickly covered it.

"What is ther card, Mister Heathen?" asked the captain, coolly.

"Um king of spades, so be," was the reply.

Rolly did his best to try and mix the pack, but Hop would not let him.

He took it from him very quickly and then the captain turned over the first card.

It was the king of spades, sure enough!

"You win," the dealer said, quietly. "Now, I reckon we'd better start ther deal over ag'in."

There was a smile that was "child-like and bland" on the face of the clever Celestial, as he slipped four cards into his sleeve.

He had cleverly got hold of the four aces with his left hand while he was talking to the men.

He put the money in his pocket, and then watched Rolly shuffle the cards.

Hop knew very well that the dealer was all at sea this time, and that the cards would be dealt in an honest way, because he could not help himself.

Anyhow, he held the winning hand right in his sleeve.

It was called a jack pot, and was opened by the captain, who was lucky enough to get three queens cold.

All came in.

Hop took one card in the draw this time.

He was too slick for the villains to catch him, and he put his whole hand among those that were discarded.

As luck would have it, the captain got another queen.

He had the next best hand out, and he kept raising the betting until all dropped out but Hop.

At length there was as much as five hundred dollars on the board.

The villains were getting nervous, and one of them began fingering the hilt of his knife.

Hop lighted a cigar, and he drew a giant firecracker from his pocket at the same time.

"Me laisee um bet to five hundled dollee!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER VI.

CAPTAIN DANGER TELLS HIS GANG HIS INTENTIONS.

Captain Danger looked at the Chinaman in amazement.

But there was no doubting that Hop had meant what he said, for he coolly laid down five one hundred dollar bills.

None of the villains imagined that he had as much money with him as that, and it nearly took away their breath when they realized it.

But they meant to have it, just the same.

There was no mistake about that.

"You must have a pretty good hand, I reckon," said the captain, as he drew his wallet. "I've got a good hand myself, so I'll call yer."

Before doing so, however, he pulled a revolver from his belt and laid it on the table.

Hop smiled blandly, and then he pulled a big, old-fashioned six-shooter from under his coat and laid it down.

"Me play dlaw pokee allee samee Melican man," he observed.

The giant cracker was concealed in his left sleeve, and the fuse was broken off pretty close, so it was ready to be exploded at any time.

The four villains grinned when they saw the big shooter.

They all thought the Chinaman was doing some awful bluffing, for what possible chance could he have against them all?

But they did not know that he had no idea of depending on the shooter to carry him through.

Captain Danger laid down the money required to call the bet, and said:

"What have you got, Mister Heathen?"

"Me gottee four lillee aces!"

Hop showed the hand and grabbed for the money with his right hand.

His left went to his cigar at the same time and the fuse of the cracker was touched to the lighted end of his cigar.

"You're a cheat!" cried Captain Danger. "That money is mine! Let go of it, or you'll be a dead heathen before you can say Jack Robinson!"

Bang!

The cracker dropped squarely in the villain's lap, exploding as it did.

"Hip hi!" yelled Hop, grabbing his revolver and pulling the trigger.

Bang!

A red light shot through the shanty, and then all was in darkness.

When the four villains recovered from the extraordinary occurrence the door was open and the Chinaman was gone.

Captain Danger's whiskers had been singed by the exploding of the cracker and his shirt was smoking.

He had fallen over backward, and when he got upon his feet he could see nothing, but could hear his companions cursing roundly.

"Duped, by jingo!" he cried. "Where is ther heathen?"

"He's gone!" exclaimed Rolly, who was peering out of the door into the darkness. "Well, ter think that he could have fooled us that way! What was it he set off; a firecracker?"

One of the other men had struck a match, for the lantern had been extinguished when Hop fired off the six-shooter, and he pointed to the burning paper that was scattered about the room.

"Yes, it was a firecracker," he said. "I seen it when ther galoot dropped it in ther captain's lap. It was a mighty cute trick, I reckon."

"An' we're out quite some money, too," spoke up the other of the four.

"He got a pile out of me, an' no mistake," said Captain Danger, shaking his head. "But I'll git that back, an' more, too, see if I don't. I'll have some of what Young Wild West has got. I'm goin' ter make that boy wish he'd never been born, boys! He ain't never goin' ter leave Glitter Gulch alive, fur no galoot what gits ther best of me kin live long after he does it! He's got money, most likely, an' I'll git hold of it after he goes under. There's goin' ter be some tall work done here in ther Gulch afore many hours. I've been studyin' ther thing over putty good since what happened in ther Coyote saloon to-night. When I rode into ther blamed old place to-night I thought I was goin' ter have things my own way, an' make ther miners have all ther more fear of me, same as was always ther case when I done it. But this here boy an' his pards has ter be there, an' they change ther programme."

The lantern was lighted while he was talking, and one of the villains had shut the door.

It so happened that none of the men who constituted the bad crowd that was called the "Dangerous Gang" had been in the saloon when the captain took his medicine from Young Wild West.

He had not told them much about the occurrence, either, and the three who were present were anxious to know all about it.

Rolly knew pretty nearly what had happened, for he had heard it from the miners.

But he wanted to hear it from the lips of the leader of the gang.

It was just then that there came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" Rolly called out, for the shanty was supposed to belong to him.

The door opened and in walked five men.

They were the rest of the Dangerous Gang, and they had come there because the captain had told one of them that he wanted to have a little talk with them.

"Come right in, boys," said Rolly, as he pulled a long bench out for them to sit upon. "It's too bad yer didn't happen along a little sooner. Yer might have been able ter catch a smart heathen what was here."

"Young Wild West's smart heathen, I s'pose?" one of them observed, as he took a seat.

"Yes; that's right."

"I've heard a whole lot of talk about Young Wild West an' his pards, an' ther gals what's with 'em, an' ther two heathen Chinese servants they've got. That's about all ther crowd is talkin' about down in Fatty Bill's. They seem ter think that Young Wild West is ace high, all right. He sorter put it to yer, captain, didn't he?"

"Yes; there's no use in saying he didn't," replied the captain, a frown creeping over his forehead.

"He got ther drop on yer, an' then he throwed yer out of ther barroom, they say?"

"Yes, he done that, all right. He's a mighty strong youngster, an' he's as quick as lightnin'. That's why he throwed me out."

"Well, he handled a galoot ther same way in the tavern after he left you!"

"Is that so?"

Captain Danger seemed to be pleased to hear that he was not the only one who had suffered defeat at the hands of Young Wild West.

He listened to what they all had to say and soon became convinced that it was nothing out of the ordinary for bad men to get their medicine from Young Wild West.

"Ther boy is a regular hummer, it seems," he observed, when he had told just what happened to him at Fatty Bill's. "But I can't understand why it is that he's managed ter live so long. I'll bet he won't never git out of Glitter Gulch alive, unless he goes to-night! I'm goin' ter be ther one what will put ther finishin' touch to him an' his pards. You all know that I ain't ther one ter allow a galoot ter live very long, after doin' what he done. He made a laughin'-stock of me, an' right before them what has always been afraid of me! I couldn't let that go, boys. It would mean that I was afraid of him. I ain't s'posed ter be afraid of any one livin', an' I ain't either. You all know that."

"That's right, cap," said Rolly, while the rest nodded.

"Jest because ther boy got ther drop on me an' took ther starch out of me, 'cause I knowed I had ter give in or die, don't say that I'm afraid of him. An' jest because he was clever enough an' strong enough ter catch me unawares an' chuck me out of ther saloon, don't say that he's going' ter be let alone by me. I made a mistake when I tried ter git a shot at him, I know. I shouldn't have showed my hand that way. But I was so mad that I couldn't help it. His pard done a putty slick thing in shootin' my revolver out of my hand, too. I thought I was gone when I seen ther flash of his shooter. That galoot has got ter die, too!"

"We may as well make a job of it, an' clean out ther other one, too," spoke up one of the villains. "Then we kin make love to ther three gals they brought to ther Guleh with 'em, an' ther won't be no one ter interfere with us."

"Have yer seen ther gals, Mike?" asked Rolly.

"Yes, I was there when they come. They're mighty fine gals, I kin say. Two of 'em ain't a great sight more'n children, an' ther other one must be somewheres between

twenty an' thirty. One of ther younger ones is a beauty. She's what yer calls a blonde. She's Young Wild West's gal, they say, an' her name is Arietta."

Mike had been pretty inquisitive, for he had learned considerable about our friends, and the rest listened, as he told what he knew.

"I s'pose Young Wild West means ter marry that gal some time, don't he?" asked Captain Danger.

"Most likely," Mike answered.

"Well, I'll be ther one as marries her, boys! An' ther weddin' will take place out in ther cave we've got ready ter take to, in case we ever git in a tight place, an' have ter leave here. It'll take place inside of two days, too. Jest bear that in mind! I ain't seen ther bride-ter-be, but I'll marry her jest 'cause she's Young Wild West's sweetheart. By jingo! I'll try an' fix things so ther young galoot kin see ther weddin' ceremony afore he dies. We've got ther name of bein' a Dangerous Gang, an' we may as well let ourselves out fur fair now. Rolly kin have one of ther other gals, and ther third one ther rest of yer kin chuck dice fur. Jest leave this thing ter me! I'll think over a good scheme, all right. Young Wild West an' his pards will find out what a dangerous gang ther Dangerous Gang is, an' don't yer furgit it!"

CHAPTER VII.

WILD GETS A LITTLE BETTER ACQUAINTED.

When Hop got back to the tavern, after his exciting adventure in the shanty, he found our hero and his partners getting anxious about him.

Wild had sent for him, but no one had been able to find him.

Hop quickly explained all that had happened, and when he had finished the scout slapped him on the back and exclaimed:

"Great gimlets! But you're a lucky heathen, as well as smart! Yer got ther best of ther gang what was tryin' ter clean yer out, eh? Well, I would have liked ter been there an' seen that. Stole ther four aces from ther pack, an' then beat 'em out with a firecracker! Ha, ha, ha!"

Hop was very proud over his achievement, and he strutted about like a peacock.

After he had thought for a few moments Wild turned to Hop and said:

"Just show me where that shanty is. I want to find out something about this dangerous gang we have heard so much about. According to what you have said that shanty must be a sort of headquarters for the rascals."

"Me showee, allee samee pletty quickee, Mislér Wild," was the reply.

"All right. Come on!"

Our friends were in the barroom at the time this conversation took place, but they had not been talking loud enough to allow the customers in the room to hear.

They had gathered in a corner, and no one had attempted to join them, after they saw that they were conversing in low tones.

Wild and the Chinaman left the tavern, going out by the rear door.

They quickly turned and headed for the shanty, however, and as they neared it Hop told our hero about the three bushes being very close to the rear of it.

"All right, Hop," was the reply. "We'll get around there, then."

They had no sooner got into the bushes when they heard approaching footsteps and voices.

It was just then that the five men came to the shanty, as has been told of.

When Wild saw them from the bushes, and had counted them, he gave a nod of satisfaction.

"I reckon this is where they hold their meetings, Hop," he whispered.

"Velly muchee likely, so be," was the retort.

"Well, it may not be very polite to do it, but I am going to find out what they talk about. I know very well that Captain Danger means me, and it is no more than right that I should try to find out how he intends to proceed to get square with me. He would have shot me dead in the saloon if Charlie had not knocked the revolver out of his hand with a bullet. That shows what he would do if he could get a sly shot at me."

"Velly bad man, so be," Hop answered. "Me find ee out ee light away lat um all bad mans. Ley tly to takee my money, but me no lettee. Me takee leir money, so be."

"Well, just keep very quiet now. I am going to get up under that window and do some listening."

"All light, Mislér Wild."

It was no doubt a very good thing that Wild thought of listening to what the villains had to say, for he heard all that was said, that has already been told to the reader.

Two or three times while Captain Danger was telling what he meant to do the young deadshot had to restrain himself from making his presence known.

But he possessed the best of judgment, and he concluded that it was best to let the villains try to go their length.

One thing about it, in case anything did happen, he now knew enough to work the thing down to a quick finish.

As the conversation came to a close and the men began leaving the shanty, Wild crept back to where Hop was waiting.

"Come on," said he. "We will go back to the tavern now. I have learned that the Dangerous Gang means to clean us all out. I'll show them something they never dreamed of before I get through with them, though."

"Lat light, Mislér Wild," was the reply. "You velly soonee makee um gang velly muchee sickee."

The two went around through the woods and soon arrived at the tavern.

"Now, Hop, I guess you have shown yourself enough for to-night," said Wild. "You had better hide the money you have got in some good place and lay low. The chances are that the Dangerous Gang will be watching for a chance to rob you; and if they do try it they won't hesitate to kill you in order to do it. You law low, do you hear?"

"Me lay velly muchee low, Mislér Wild."

Wild told his partners and the girls what was up, when he got a chance to talk with them.

Of course, the girls were not a little disturbed when they heard that they were picked to become the wives of three of the villainous gang.

But they had the greatest of confidence in Young Wild West and his partners, and so they did not worry much.

They knew that, being forewarned, the young deadshot would quickly find a way to down them.

The next morning they were up bright and early.

The sun had come up like a great ball of fire, which gave all indications of a very warm day before them.

But almost everybody in Glitter Gulch was used to warm days, so there was little or no comment to be heard.

After breakfast Wild and Charlie went for a walk around the mining camp.

They wanted to get better acquainted with the good people there.

They soon found that they had become very popular with the majority of the miners, for those who had not seen or heard of them before had spread it around what they were like.

The biggest mine in the Gulch was owned and operated by a syndicate, and the man in charge was a native of Denver, named Jacob Murray.

The Ten Spot was the name of the mine, and Jake, as he was called by everybody in the district, was a nice sort of a man, well experienced in the business he was engaged in and a thorough Westerner.

It was generally known that he was not afraid of Captain Danger, but as the two had never had any trouble, it was not known which of the two was the real boss of the mining camp.

If it came to a showdown, as one of the miners said, Jake Murray would have a big majority of the miners on his side.

Why the Dangerous Gang was tolerated in Glitter Gulch none of them could exactly tell. But so long as the bad crowd did not do anything openly that was very bad they were let alone, and Captain Danger held the undisputed title of the "boss bad man" of the Gulch.

Wild was directed to Jake Murray by one of the men, who was anxious to have law and order in the camp, and when our hero met the man he made up his mind right away that he was a good one.

It so happened that Murray had never heard of Young Wild West, but there was nothing so strange in this, since he paid little attention to anything outside of his own business.

He shook hands with him and nodded his head in a satisfied way.

"You're what I call a fine specimen of a boy of ther West," he said. "I'm more than glad to get acquainted with you. So you have been warming up Captain Danger a little, have you? Well, he certainly needs it. I never had any real trouble with ther galoot; but I know he needs to be tamed. I heard about what happened in Fatty Bill's place last night. You must be a cyclone!"

"Hardly that, I reckon. But such ruffians as Captain

Danger are a little too slow for me, that's all," was the laughing reply.

Then Wild told him how he had listened at the window of the shanty and had heard the plotting of the scoundrels.

"Git out!" exclaimed Jake Murray. "So they're goin' ther limit now, are they? Well, Young Wild West, that gang has got ter be downed, an' I'll help yer do ther job. Ther've certainly declared war ag'in you an' your friends, so it is fur you ter catch ther bull by ther horns. You go right ahead, an' I'll guarantee that you'll have ther majority of ther miners on your side, if it comes ter a general fight. There's a good many here who's afraid of Captain Danger, but they don't like him. They won't take any part, mostly likely. But there's them what will take part; I'll see to that!"

"All right, Mr. Murray. Don't say anything about this yet. I am going to give the Dangerous Gang a chance to show their hand. Then I'll start at them. I want them to make the first move in the game."

"Well, I'll tell a few men what kin be relied on that Captain Danger has put up a job to clean you folks out. I'll have ter do that much in order to git them interested."

"All right, then. You know what's best, I suppose. The reason I spoke to you about this is because I don't want it thought that I came here to Glitter Gulch for the purpose of making trouble. There are nine of the gang, but with my partners' help I reckon I could soon down them. I've tackled such gangs before, you know."

"An' you always came out at ther top, too, didn't yer?"

"You kin bet your life he did!" spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, who had refrained from saying anything so far. "Wild always comes out on top. Sometimes it looks as though he ain't goin' ter, but he always manages ter, jest ther same."

"Well," said Jake Murray, "if that gang goes ter cuttin' up an' makin' things warm fur ther honest element here they've got ter be downed, that's all. As I said afore, yer kin count on me."

They talked it over a little longer, and then they started off to make the rounds of the camp.

About five minutes later, when they came to a little pass that broke through a high cliff they suddenly were confronted by two horsemen.

One of them was Captain Danger, and there was a sardonic smile on his evil-looking face.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STAGE COACH IS HELD UP.

Both Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie had been on the alert the moment they heard the approach of the horses, and they were ready for business when they were confronted by Captain Danger and his companion, who was no other than the villain called Rolly.

The two had seen our friends go up to the Ten Spot Mine, and they had mounted their horses and made

around to the little pass for the express purpose of intercepting them.

It was evident that Captain Danger thought he had them dead to rights, but he should have known better, considering what had taken place the night before.

The villain had a revolver in his hand, and he evidently thought sure he could raise it in time to prevent Young Wild West from drawing one.

"So we meet ag'in, Young Wild West?" he said, the smile broadening on his face. "It is under a little different circumstances than last night. Then you got the drop on me, but now——"

As quick as a flash the young deadshot jerked his revolver from the holster.

"Drop that shooter, you sneaking coyote!" he exclaimed.

The two horsemen were dismayed.

Never had they seen a weapon pulled as quickly as that.

Cheyenne Charlie had been less than a second in covering Rolly, too, and the two villains sat on their horses, their revolvers in their hands, but not daring to raise them to fire.

"Drop your shooter, Captain Danger!"

The command rang out clear and distinct.

Young Wild West meant business, and there was no mistaking it.

The face of the villainous leader of the Dangerous Gang turned white and he let his revolver drop to the ground.

His companion did the same thing, though he had not been told to do so.

"That's right," said Charlie, nodding to him. "If yer hadn't done that I was goin' ter drop yer, yer measly coyote! I was jest waitin' ter see whether yer wanted ter live a little longer or not."

"So you think we meet under different circumstances this time, eh, Captain Danger?" remarked our hero, a calm smile playing about his lips. "Will you please explain yourself?"

"I thought I had you, that's all," was the reply.

"Ah! You thought so, eh?"

"You might know I did, by the way I spoke."

"Well, I think you made a big mistake when you thought that way. How about it?"

"Well, there's another time coming, maybe."

"There is another time coming, all right. But when it comes you'll be apt to go under. I promise you that the next time I draw a shooter on you I am going to bring you down. I mean what I say! Now I am going to give you a bit of good advice. It is that you make up your mind to be fair and square, and give up the idea of trying to kill and rob us and abduct the girls that belong to our party. I know you have planned to do this, and by rights I should shoot you and your friend there without giving you a chance. I am not going to do that, however, because I am not built that way. You can do as you like, but I assure you that the next time I pull a shooter on you I am going to drop you! Now, then, just turn around and show us how fast you can ride through that pass—the two of you do it! Do you hear?"

But it was hardly necessary to ask if they heard, for

they were wheeling their horses around before the words were out of his mouth.

Away they galloped through the pass, as though they were running a mad race to see who would get through first.

"Wild, let me have a shot at one of their hats?" Charlie exclaimed, as he raised his rifle to his shoulder.

Our hero nodded.

Crang!

The sharp report rang out and Rolly made a grab for his hat, but too late to catch it, for the scout's bullet hit the rim and clipped it off his head as cleanly as though a hand had done it.

"Whoopee!" yelled Charlie. "Look at ther galoots go!"

Wild smiled.

He was well satisfied with the result of the meeting with the two villains.

"I reckon they know what's what now, Charlie," he said.

"You kin bet your life they do!" was the reply. "If they don't they're putty thick, that's all."

Half an hour later our two friends were sitting on the porch at the tavern with Jim Dart.

They were relating what had happened to Jim when Murray came along.

The boss of the Ten Spot Mine had heard the shot that Charlie fired, and he had been anxious ever since it happened to learn what it was done for.

Wild introduced Jim, and then Murray asked:

"Who fired that shot after you'd been away from the mine a few minutes?"

"I did," answered Charlie.

"What did you shoot at?"

"Ther hat what was on ther head of one of ther Dangerous Gang."

"Is that so?"

"That's right, Mr. Murray," spoke up our hero. "We run against Captain Danger and one of his men rather suddenly, and they thought they had us dead to rights. But they soon found out that they had made a mistake, for, though they both had shooters in their hands, they were not quick enough. We made them drop their shooters, and then, after I had given them a little advice, I told them to light out. Charlie wanted to try a shot at one of their hats, so I let him go ahead. He knocked the hat off the galoot's head, and that hustled them along a bit faster."

"Great Jupiter! So they were after you, eh?"

"Yes; they wanted us badly, too."

"Well, I reckon Captain Danger must be showin' his hand fur fair."

"As far as we are concerned, he is. But I told him the next time I pulled a shooter on him I was going to drop him."

"Yer did, eh? What did he say to that?"

"Not a word."

"Well, I reckon you'll do ther right thing if yer do drop him, Young Wild West."

"Oh, I didn't exactly mean that. I wouldn't shoot him unless it was to keep him from shooting some one else. I

never yet dropped a scoundrel without it being absolutely necessary to do it."

"I don't believe yer did. But, hello! Here comes ther stage coach. She's late goin' out to-day."

A rather dilapidated stage coach of the old-fashioned type came around the corner of the blacksmith shop just then, the prancing leaders acting very frisky, as though they were anxious to get on the long, rocky road to Phoenix.

The driver was a smooth-faced man of sixty, and he held the ribbons as though he took great pride in being master of the outfit.

There was only one passenger to go, and when the stage coach halted before the tavern he came out and boarded it.

He was a man who had made quite a pile and was now starting to return to his home in Missouri.

This is the way the boss of the Ten Spot Mine explained it.

The driver cracked his whip, and away went the outfit.

"They'll fetch up in Phoenix about ther middle of ther afternoon, I reckon," said Murray. "They're a little mite late in startin', but old Pete has got four good horses there. He knows his business. He's been drivin' ever since the place came to be a minin' camp, an' he ain't never had an accident of any kind yet. He'll take that happy passenger through to Phoenix all right."

But in less than half an hour later Murray had reason to change his mind about that.

He was just going to leave to get back to the mine, when the clatter of hoofs and the rumble of wheels sounded.

Then what should burst into view but the stage coach, the driver whipping his horses like mad.

He reined them in at the front of the tavern and pointed inside the stage coach.

Several men were there, and they hastened to see what he meant.

"What's ther matter, Pete?" asked the proprietor of the tavern, running out.

"Road agents!" was the reply. "My passenger got shot an' robbed!"

Young Wild West and his partners were at the side of the vehicle in a jiffy.

The excited driver had not exaggerated any when he said his passenger had been shot.

The man was dead!

He lay in the bottom of the stage coach as he had fallen, probably, for it is hardly likely that old Pete, as he was called, had taken time to get down from the box and look at him.

"Take it easy, my friend," Wild said to him, as he walked to the front of the vehicle. "Just tell us what happened."

"Well, I hadn't got more'n about two miles an' a half outside of ther camp when two masked galoots steps out an' orders me ter halt. They had ther drop on me, so I done so. Then my passenger fired a shot at 'em an' missed. One of ther galoots let go two or three shots at him an' he caved in. Then, while ther other one held a revolver p'inted at me, he went through ther man's pockets an'

took all he had. I was ordered ter turn around an' ride back, which I done mighty quick. That's all there is to it."

"You haven't any idea who the two masked galoots were, have you?"

"No. I couldn't tell whether I'd ever seen 'em afore or not. I was a little excited, an' they was masked, so I couldn't see their faces."

"Come boys!" exclaimed Young Wild West, as he ran to get his horse. "We've got some work to do!"

CHAPTER IX.

THE CAVE OF THE GANG.

Captain Danger and his man Rolly were in anything but a pleasant frame of mind when they galloped through the short pass and came out into the woods at the other side.

They had passed through an experience that was not altogether to their liking, and they were heartily glad when they were out of it.

Rolly was pale as a ghost when he reined in his horse beside the black his leader rode.

The fact that he was bareheaded, and his hair flying all over his head made him look all the more frightened.

"Cap, I reckon them two galoots is real dangerous," he said.

"Yes, but they are bucking against a dangerous lot of men," was the reply. "Do yer know one thing, Rolly? We're in fur it now! Young Wild West has been goin' around this mornin' findin' out how ther miners stand. He means ter start a fight ag'in us an' clean us out. I don't know how he found out what we meant ter do, but he has found it out, jest ther same. We may as well strike in an' show what we kin do, right now. Come on! We'll ride out an' hold up ther stage coach when it comes along. We ain't never done anything as bold as that yet. But it's time ter begin now."

"What!"

Rolly gasped for his breath.

"I mean what I say," retorted the captain. "I've got a couple of masks in my pocket. Here's one of 'em. Ther stage coach will be along putty soon, so we'll start right now. I reckon we'll give ther blame old camp a stirrin' up what it ain't had yet. No one will ever know that we done ther holdin' up, an' if they do find it out I don't care. We're out fur all we kin git now, an' it's death ter Young Wild West an' all them what's friendly ter him. Come on!"

Rolly took the black mask that was handed to him in a mechanical way.

It was evident that he could hardly realize what the captain meant.

But it flashed upon him a moment later, and the thought of the plunder they would be likely to get made him ready and willing to carry out the daring scheme.

"We'll go to ther cave as soon as we clean out ther passengers," went on Captain Danger, in a matter-of-fact

way. "We may as well git ready ter make our quarters there, anyhow."

"All right, cap."

Then the two villains, who had made up their minds to go still deeper in crime and become road agents, rode off to wait for the stage coach, which they both knew was due to start from Glitter Gulch at about that time.

They got to a spot that would suit and dismounted.

Then they had to wait much longer than they expected to, for, as has already been told, the stage coach was rather late in leaving that morning.

But when it came along they got in their work quickly.

If they had not been enraged from the way they had been called by Young Wild West they would hardly have taken such a desperate step, and when they realized that murder, as well as theft, had been committed, they were not a little frightened.

It was Captain Danger who had shot the passenger, and not until they reached the cave they had spoken of did he say a word concerning the crime.

Then he looked at the only man who knew of it and said:

"I done it, didn't I, Rolly?"

"You sartinly shot him clean, cap," was the reply. "But he shot first. It was in self-defense."

"That's it!" and the face of the captain brightened.

He seemed to feel better now.

"Was that ther first galoot yer ever fixed, cap?" his lieutenant queried, as he rolled over a stone in the cave and made a seat for himself.

"Yes, ther first one that way. Of course, I've dropped a few in barroom rows, an' ther like. But that's ther first one I ever put out of ther way fur ther sake of ther money he had."

"But yer didn't do it altogether for that. He shot first, yer know."

"Yes, but ther people in Glitter Gulch won't look at it that way. That's what's botherin' me."

"Well, what do you care how they'll look at it? In ther first place, it ain't likely that they'll know who it was what made ther holdup. Cap, yer ain't as confident as yer was when yer proposed this. Then it was me that couldn't see through it, an' now it's you. You made me so surprised when yer proposed ther thing that I didn't know what ter say. But since that time I've been thinkin' over it, an' now I feel that we've started on ther road ter wealth, fur fair."

"That's right, Rolly. I'm glad ter hear yer talk that way. You've got it jest right. We're on ther road ter wealth, all right. We'll foller up this business, now that we're in it. Of course, we've got ter let ther gang know all about it. Jest git things in shape here as much as yer kin. To-night we'll all come out here an' hold a little meetin'. It's a good thing we found this cave. Ever since we did find it I've been thinking' about doin' the very thing we've started on now. Now it's come. Here's ther place where I'll marry ther gal that Young Wild West calls his sweetheart."

"An' I'll marry ther youngest of ther other two, cap," added Rolly, rubbing his hands.

"An' ther rest of ther gang kin chuck dice fur ther other one. Ha, ha, ha!"

It struck the villain as being very funny, though just why it would be hard to imagine.

There was not much fixing up to be done in the cave—or, rather, there was no chance to do it, since there was nothing to do it with.

All there was in the line of furniture in the cave was a few blankets and an empty barrel.

The barrel had contained whisky, which had been stolen from a wagon that had been going to the mining camp two weeks before.

The Dangerous Gang had managed to steal it without the theft being discovered until the wagon got to its destination, so there was no chance of it being found.

The whisky had been taken out and carried to Glitter Gulch in small quantities, and now the barrel was empty.

Captain Danger walked over to it, and shook it.

"Dry as a bone inside, I guess," he observed.

"That's right, cap," replied Rolly. "We got ther last putty nigh a week ago."

"I wish we had a little now. It wouldn't go bad."

"That's right. A drink wouldn't go bad jest now."

"Well, we ain't got it, so we'll go without it till we git ter Fatty Bill's. Jest figure up what each man ought ter bring over to-night. We might have ter hide fur a day or two some time or other. There's no tellin' jest what's goin' ter happen. If we git them gals here we'll have ter lay low fur a while. We want ter make it appear that we've carried 'em off ter some other place. This cave ain't ter be found very easy, yer know. No one would find it, unless they was ter foller some of us here."

"Well, we want some things ter use in cookin', some more blankets an' somethin' ter set down on. We ought ter have a table, too. If we kin manage ter fetch 'em over to-night we'll be putty well fixed fur a starter, anyhow."

"I reckon we kin manage it all right. S'pose we go back to ther camp now?"

"I reckon we'd better. But we'd better go ther same way as we come, fur it may be that some one's lookin' around fur ther road agents."

"Young Wild West might be lookin' fur 'em. He is one of ther kind that likes ter hunt road agents, they say."

"I'll bet he is, cap."

"We'll keep our eyes peeled when we go out. Come on!"

They had brought their horses right into the cave with them.

The cave was located in a deep cut that ran in a zig-zag fashion, along the sloping side of the mountain range, and it was not more than a quarter of a mile from the trail that led into Phoenix from Glitter Gulch.

Though Captain Danger said it was hidden so that no one would be apt to find it, the cave was really one that would be discovered quite easily, providing a sharp person was looking for such a place.

All one would have to do would be to make a search of the cut.

Still, there were other openings that had the appear-

ance of being mouths of caves, and it might be that it would be overlooked.

The two men mounted their horses and rode outside.

They took a good look both up and down the narrow cut before proceeding farther, and, seeing nothing, the captain said:

"I reckon everything's all right, Rolly. Come on."

Off they rode, and just before they reached the scene of the late holdup they turned to the left and headed for the mining camp in a roundabout way.

They got there without meeting any one, and when they had put away their horses they began to feel safe.

It was the shanty belonging to Rolly that they were at now, for it was in the little stable in the rear of this that the captain kept his horse.

Rolly brought out some whisky, and after each had swallowed a stiff horn Captain Danger breathed a sigh of relief.

"Now," said he, "I reckon we'll take a walk down to Fatty Bill's and find out what's goin' on."

"All right. We'll tell ther boys we was up on ther ledge prospectin', cap."

"Yes, that's it. We don't know nothin' about ther holdup, of course. That will be a big surprise ter us."

Rolly grinned.

The next minute the two left the shanty and walked leisurely toward the saloon, which was not very far away.

CHAPTER X.

WILD SETS A TRAP.

Young Wild West and his partners were soon mounted and away over the trail.

They thought they might possibly come across the two road agents that had held up the stage coach and shot the passenger, or possibly find some clue to their whereabouts.

As they rode along Wild was doing some pretty hard thinking.

"Boys," said he, suddenly, "I wouldn't be a bit surprised if we find out that the Dangerous Gang is responsible for the holdup. There were only two of them, the driver said, and we met two of the gang, Charlie."

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed the scout. "Yer kin bet that it was them same two what done ther business. S'pose Jim goes an' looks fur them galoots, while you an' me goes out along ther trail? If Captain Danger an' ther other feller ain't ter be found around ther camp it will show putty well that they was ther ones?"

"A good idea, Charlie. Go on, Jim. Ride straight to the spot where we last saw the two, and then follow the little pass and go on around through the camp. If you find them it will show that they are not the ones, or else they have come back pretty quick."

Jim was soon riding back at a swift pace.

Wild and Charlie went on, however, and at length they came to a halt at the identical spot where the holdup had occurred.

Then began a search which lasted for over an hour.

The ground being hard and stony, the villains had managed to conceal their trail pretty well.

But our two friends were persistent, and they found it after a while.

Then they rode into the narrow cut and allowed their horses to go ahead at a walk.

Wild and Charlie were both keen of sight.

They were on the watch continually, and anything that looked like a cave was examined by them.

In this way they finally came upon the cave the two villains had left but a short time before, for they had been too long in getting there to catch them in it.

The two dismounted.

"I reckon we're on the right track, Charlie," our hero whispered. "We will now find out whether there is any one in here or not. One thing, there has been somebody here lately—very lately, I should say."

"Yes. There are hoofprints leading to and from the cave, Wild," was the scout's reply.

"That makes it appear that they have been here and gone away again."

The young deadshot left his partner outside with the horses and crept softly inside the cave.

It was quite a risky thing to do, but he was used to taking risks.

Holding a revolver in his hand, ready to use it at the least notice, he went inside.

It was quite dark, but once inside he was able to see pretty well all over the cave, which was a pretty good-sized one.

There was every evidence of horses having been there but a short time before, so it was only natural that they should come to the conclusion that they had belonged to the two villains who had held up the stage coach.

Whether they were Captain Danger and his companion, whom they had met that morning, remained to be found out.

"Well, what do you think of this place, Charlie?" Wild asked, when he had called the scout in, after finding that there was no one there.

"It looks as though they're jest gittin' it ready fur a hidin' place, Wild," was the reply. "Didn't yer say that yer heard that galoot of a Captain Danger say that he was goin' ter take ther gals to a cave somewhere?"

"By jingo! I forgot about that, Charlie. This must be the identical place he was talking of. That makes it all plain to me now. The Dangerous Gang means to hold forth here, and it was the captain and the other fellow we had the meeting with that held up the stage coach. We will have the whole thing down fine pretty soon, I reckon."

"I reckon so."

"Do you know what I am going to do, Charlie?"

"What, Wild?"

"Set a trap for the scoundrels."

"Good! What are yer goin' ter do?"

"I'll have to think of it. But there is one thing certain, and that is that they will come here, sooner or later. Now, then, the thing is to set a trap, so the will be caught in

here. Just look around a little and see if you can make a suggestion."

The scout took a close look at the interior of the cave.

There was nothing there that would afford a chance to rig up any trap, as far as he could see.

And with our hero it was the same way.

Then they walked outside.

Once there they both saw something that looked as though it would help them out.

The cut was so narrow right before the mouth of the cave that no more than two horses could well pass abreast.

There was quite a steep slant above the mouth, and on a ledge about thirty feet above was a big rock that weighed tons.

This was right on the edge, so that it would require but little to dislodge it and send it rolling into the cut.

And when it came down it was almost certain to land so it would effectually block the mouth of the cave.

"Charlie, you stay here and keep a lookout; I am going up there and find out how much it will take to move that rock, so it will come down," said Wild.

"All right," was the reply. "I reckon you've got ther trap all right. Ther only thing ter do now is ter set it fur ther Dangerous Gang."

Wild climbed quite easily to the ledge.

When he got there he was pleased to discover that the rock was almost ready to topple over, and that one man could easily push it over.

"Throw me up a lariat, Charlie," he said, as he leaned over the ledge.

"Right yer are, Wild."

Up came the scout's lariat.

Wild soon made the rope fast to the rock by putting the loop around the upper part of it.

As if nature had arranged things just for him to proceed with his scheme, there were plenty of scraggy bushes growing on the slope, and he let the rope come down through them, so it was concealed from view.

He had not figured out what he was going to do with the other end of the lariat yet, but he wanted to arrange it so that the villains would trap themselves when they came to the cave.

Inside the cave, a few feet from the mouth, was a rock that might afford a sort of protection if it were rolled up, in case of an attack.

The moment Wild had a good look at it he decided on a plan of action.

"Charlie," said he, just help me to get the end of this rope under that rock."

"All right, Wild. But what's that fur?"

"Well, it is hardly likely that the galoots will come here before to-night. It will be dark then, so they won't see the rope. If they do come we must make it our business to follow them. When they get in here we will let out a yell and fire a couple of shots. It will be more than likely that they will push this rock up as quickly as they can to protect the entrance."

"That's right. I'd do that very thing myself."

"Well, when the rock is rolled over it will give a pull on it, won't it?"

"It sartinly will. I see now, Wild! Then down will come that big rock from above. Whew!"

The scout slapped his thigh with delight.

"That's a trap all right," he added.

"Well, it may not work, but we will set the trap, just the same."

"Sartin. If it is in ther night time when they come here it's bound ter work. Now, over with ther rock!"

"Not too far, Charlie. We don't want to tighten the rope so the rock will come down while we're in here. I am not anxious to be imprisoned in a cave of this kind, even if it was for only a short time."

"We'll be mighty careful about that."

Wild fixed the rope the way he wanted it, and then the rock was rolled upon it.

It was drawn all but taut, and another turn of the rock would most likely bring the big one down from above.

"There!" exclaimed our hero, surveying his work. "I reckon that is a trap, all right. The rope wouldn't be hardly noticed in the daytime, much less in the dark."

"You're right on that."

"Well, we will watch the galoots closely, and the moment any of them leave the Gulch we will follow them. I wonder how Jim has made out?"

"I hope he ain't run inter any trouble."

"Oh, he is pretty cautious, Charlie. Jim is always on the watch for danger."

"I know that. He's a little more careful than I am sometimes. Are yer goin' back now?"

"Yes; come on."

The two now left the cave, and, after looking the scene over, they mounted their horses and rode back to the trail.

A few minutes later they came in sight of the tavern, and when they found Jim sitting on the porch they felt relieved.

Whether he had discovered anything of importance or not, Jim was all right, and that was one good thing.

CHAPTER XI.

WILD MAKES A DISCOVERY.

"How did you make out, boys?" Jim Dart asked, as Wild and Charlie brought their horses to a halt in front of the tavern.

"Well, we didn't catch the road agents," Wild answered, as he dismounted.

Hop came out to take care of the horses, and as he started around the tavern with them Wild and Charlie took their seats on the porch with Jim.

There were others about, and our hero did not want to let them know all their business.

"Well," said Dart, in a low tone of voice, "I found the two men you spoke of. They are in the saloon now. But they had not been there long when I got there, so the boss of the place told me. I managed to get a chance to whisper to him, and he did not seem to be the least backward in giving me the information I wanted."

"Oh, Fatty Bill seems to be an all right fellow," Wild

retorted. "He can't help it if his saloon is used by the Dangerous Gang as a sort of headquarters. Had the two galoots been there before that morning?"

"No; he said they had not. All the talk is about the holdup, and Captain Danger seems to be very much interested in it. He has offered five hundred dollars' reward for the two men who did the trick; and declares that he will fill them with lead when they are found."

"That's putty good!" exclaimed Charlie. "He's one of 'em himself. He'll have a chance ter commit suicide afore long, maybe. How did Captain Danger act when yer went in ther saloon, Jim?"

"He did not seem to pay any particular attention to me. But I was watching him, though, and all the rest I did not know in the room."

"It's a wonder that he didn't pick a row with yer, an' then try a shot at yer."

"Well, I am glad he didn't. I don't want to spoil Wild's plans any, but if Captain Danger had picked a row with me I would surely have shot him."

"Well, Jim," spoke up our hero, "I have got some plans. But let's go inside by the girls. There are too many around here, waiting to catch what we are talking about. I suppose they are interested, though, since they know we went out to look for the villains who killed the passenger of the stage coach. I'll just go inside and let them know as much as I care to just now. You fellows go on in by the girls."

Wild walked into the barroom, and those who had been loitering on the porch quickly followed him.

"Did yer strike anything out on ther trail, Mr. West?" one of them asked.

"Well, we couldn't find a sign of the galoots first off. But after a while we struck something that may lead to catching them. I don't care to tell just what that is now. There are more out searching for them, are there not?"

"Oh, yes. About fifteen is out now."

"It is funny we did not come across any of them."

Wild knew it was not funny at all, for the searchers had not come where they were, and that was why they had not seen them.

The chances were that they had all gone further along the trail, thinking the villains had gone that way, after finishing their foul work of killing and robbing the passenger of the stage coach.

Wild now left the room and went in where his friends were.

Charlie and Jim were telling the girls of their experience of the morning, and it is needless to say that the girls were very much interested, especially when they heard about the trap.

Wild was bent on finding out for sure that Captain Danger had been one of the road agents, so he declared that he was going out on a little scouting trip to try and discover something.

It was about an hour before noon when he left the tavern by the rear way.

The searching party was not in yet, but he felt pretty certain that it would not find the cave the two villains had been at, unless by accident.

Our hero thought it would be advisable to go to the

vicinity of the shanty the nine men had been in the night before.

He took it that the shanty was a sort of meeting place for the Dangerous Gang.

He could easily reach the clump of woods back of it without running the risk of being seen by any one who might be in it.

The young deadshot was not long in getting into the woods behind the shanty.

Then he peered cautiously out.

To all appearances, the shanty was not occupied by any one just then.

Wild made up his mind to find out whether it was or not.

Creeping cautiously from his place of concealment, he got close under the window he had listened at the night before.

It did not take him two minutes to become convinced that the shanty was empty.

Then it occurred to the boy that it would be a good idea for him to get inside it.

He looked around for a way to get in.

Just then his foot went through the surface of the ground, and in an effort to catch himself, the ground gave way beneath him, and down he went out of sight!

Young Wild West had found a way to get under the shanty, if not directly into it.

There was a cellar under the building, which was not a common thing in that part of the country.

The fact was that the shanty had been built by an eccentric miner, who had come from the Eastern States.

He had been one of the first to build, and, finding a cave there, he had built the shanty over it, thus forming a natural cellar.

But the Easterner had not lived long after he built the shanty.

It was not occupied by any one when the villain called Rolly struck the camp, and he took possession of it.

Strange as it may seem, he had not discovered that there was a cellar under the little building.

He thought it was like the ordinary run of shanties, and he never even bothered to look for anything different about it.

Neither did any one else.

So used to surprises was the boy that he did not even utter an exclamation aloud as he felt himself going down.

But it was only a drop of nine or ten feet, and he landed on his feet, really sliding part of the way.

When he looked around, after recovering his balance, the boy gave a nod of satisfaction.

"That is one way to get into a cellar," he muttered, under his breath. "By jove! Who would have thought that there was a place like this under the shanty? I'll bet the Dangerous Gang don't know of it."

It was musty in the underground place, and but for the opening our hero dropped through there was no means of getting light in there, save what came through the cracks in the floor overhead.

Our hero walked around and made a close examination of the floor over him.

There was no trap door or anything like it there.

"Whoever built the shanty must have intended to get down here from the outside," he thought.

Then he walked over to where he had dropped down, and, scraping aside the dirt, soon discovered some rotten boards that were in the form of a battered door.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "There was a way to get down from the outside, and it got concealed by earth. Here is the door, and there are the steps. They are pretty steep ones, but they are all right, I reckon."

Sure enough, he found steps that led down into the cellar.

They were made of flat stones, and some of them had become dislodged from his hurried descent.

Wild took another look around the little cellar, and then climbed out of it.

A glance told him that if he had two or three short boards and a shovel he could hide the opening from the view of any one who might come there.

He decided that it was worth trying to do, for he figured that he could set another trap for the Dangerous Gang, in case the one already set did not work.

He looked around, and, seeing no one, he hurried to the shed close in the rear of the shanty.

There was nothing there that would do to cover the hole.

But just then he happened to catch sight of a pile of hay stacked against the side of the shanty.

That gave him an idea.

"I reckon I'll move that pile," he muttered. "If it puzzles the galoot who put it there as to who did it, all right. I can't help that. The hay will cover that hole nicely, and I haven't the time to fix it any better just now."

He quickly moved the hay, for there was not much of it, and then the opening in the ground was covered effectually.

The young deadshot had just finished the job when he heard voices from the front of the shanty.

Some of the villains were coming there.

He quickly darted in the bushes, but this was hardly necessary, for no one came around.

Wild could hear them as they entered the building, and he could easily judge that there was as many as half a dozen in the gang.

"I reckon I'll find out what the next move is to be," he thought, as he crept up near the pile of hay and concealed himself under some of it.

CHAPTER XII.

"COUNTING CHICKENS BEFORE THEY ARE HATCHED."

Captain Danger waited long enough to get his gang together and then they all went to Rolly's shanty.

They had not the least idea that Young Wild West was outside, or any one else, so they did not bother to look around, but went right in the shanty.

"Shet ther door, boys," said the captain. "There's no tellin' but that some one might have follered us, an' if

they have they ain't goin' ter git close enough ter hear anything. You've heard somethin' of what was done by me an' Rolly this morning', but yer don't know it all. Yer know that we was out to ther cave, an' that we're goin' ter move over there to-night, 'cause we've told yer that much."

"I reckon I kin guess somethin' else, too," spoke up the man named Mike, winking at the rest.

"What kin yer guess, Mike?" Rolly asked.

"That it was you two what held up ther stage coach," was the bold reply.

The guilty pair glanced at each other.

"What makes yer think that way?" asked the captain, showing just the least sign of uneasiness.

"Well, you two was away at ther time, an' it was two what done ther job. That's one reason why I think it was you fellers."

"What other reason have yer got fur thinkin' that way?"

"Well, I know that yer meant ter go in that business when we took ter stoppin' at ther cave."

"I might as well tell you all that Mike is right in his guess," said the villainous leader of the Dangerous Gang. "Me an' Rolly was ther ones as held up ther stage coach, an' we got a nice little pile of money from it, too. I'll divide it up now, if you say so."

"Well, there ain't none of us overflush, I reckon," answered Mike, grinning at the rest.

"Set down, then. There is jest about three thousand dollars in ther pile ther galoot had. That will give yer all three hundred dollars apiece an' me six hundred. I s'pose you're all willin' that I should have a double share, since I'm ther captain, an' it was me what put an end to ther galoot?"

"We are sartinly willin' ter that, cap!" cried Rolly.

The rest showed their hearty agreement to this proposition, for they believed that a leader should get the most of the proceeds when division was made.

They all were just about bright enough to know that they could not get along very well without a leader.

Captain Danger produced the booty and carefully counted it over.

The money was divided, and then he pulled out an old silver watch.

"This was on ther galoot, too," he said. "But it won't do fur any of us ter wear it, not around Glitter Gulch, anyhow. We'll hide it somewheres."

"Give it ter me, cap," spoke up Rolly. "I'll stick it down through a crack that's in ther floor over in ther corner there. No one will ever find it there."

The timepiece was handed over, and then Rolly forced it through the crack in the floor.

He did not know that it dropped into the cellar that was under the shanty, but it did, the dirt being so soft where it struck that it made no noise.

"Now, then, boys, I want ter find out if you're all satisfied ter go inter this thing with me," said Captain Danger, casting a glance around the room. "'Cause if yer ain't now is ther time ter say so. There's goin' ter be a lot of risk to it, an' it may be that we'll have ter stay out of Glitter Gulch altogether, unless we kin disguise our-

selves as strangers. If we're goin' ter pursue ther business of robbin' ther stage coach, an' also ther travelers that foller ther trail both ways, we'll make lots of money. Most likely we kin make ther miners here believe that it is a gang of strangers what's hidin' around somewhere an' doin' ther work. We kin jine in with 'em an' make believe hunt fur ther robbers. In that case we'll be safe ter live here an' do jest as we have been doin'. We will stay here ther biggest part of ther time, anyhow, unless it gits too hot fur us. If that time comes it will be different, an' we'll have ter work accordin'ly. Now what do yer say? Is it ter be ther whole hog, or only half ther hog, as we've been doin'?"

"Ther whole hog!" went up from all hands.

"Good! I like ter see things unanimous. Now I'll tell yer what I've got on fur to-night. We'll all go over in twos an' threes to-night, an' each man will take somethin' that's needed there, sich as his own plate, cup an' knife an' fork. Blankets must be took, too; an' we've got ter have a table an' some chairs. I reckon a couple of horses could carry over enough boards ter make ther table. We've got plenty of nails an' enough tools ter do ther job."

"There won't be no trouble about that part of it, cap," spoke up Mike. "I am a carpenter by trade, an' I kin soon knock a table together."

"Good! That settles that part of it. Now, then, we'll talk about another part of the game. It's the gals now. We've got ter rig a plan ter git 'em an' put 'em in ther cave, where they'll never be found by their friends. It are most likely that they'll leave ther tavern ter look around a bit this afternoon, an' we must be on ther watch fur 'em. We've sorter made Young Wild West an' his pards think that we're goin' ter keep quiet, so he won't be thinkin' of anything like that. If it happens that ther galoots is with ther gals when they come out somethin' must be done ter attract their attention, so we kin git a chance ter git ther gals. If a couple of us was ter start a make-believe fight an' holler murder, it are more'n likely that Young Wild West an' his pards would run ter see what was ther matter. Then ther rest of us could grab ther gals, stop their cries an' make off with 'em. I don't say that this plan kin be follered out, fur it might be that they won't come out to-day ter give us the chance. But if they don't come out to-day we'll set ther tavern afire to-night, an' then in ther excitement we kin git away with 'em, I reckon."

"An' you're ter have Young Wild West's gal fur your wife, cap?" Mike asked.

"Yes; that's sartin."

"An' Rolly is ter have his pick of ther other two?"

"Yes."

"An' ther rest of us is ter chuck dice fur ther other one, then?"

"That would be a fair way, wouldn't it?"

"Well, I think Rolly ought ter take ther same chances as ther rest of us."

"Rolly is what I calls my lieutenant, yer know," and the captain shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, but he didn't git no bigger share than ther rest of us did when yer divided up ther money. So why should

he be sure of gittin' one of ther gals? He ought ter take his chances, along with ther rest of us."

"All right, boys," spoke up Rolly. "I'll take my chance with ther rest of yer. Ther captain kin raffle off both of ther gals, an' ther ones what wins 'em kin have 'em. If I ain't one of ther lucky ones I'll rig myself up as a preacher an' do ther marryin'."

"That's all right," observed a doubter in the bunch, as he shook his head. "But ther first thing is ter git ther gals. Then we kin settle on what's ter be done with 'em. We ain't got 'em yet, an' no one knows jest how we're goin' ter git 'em. It's countin' chickens afore they're hatched, as my grandmother used ter say."

"That's right enough," answered Captain Danger, nodding his head. "But I reckon I'll find a way ter git ther gals, jest as I'll find a way ter catch Young Wild West an' let him have ther chance ter see 'em married ter us. I ain't so awful smart, but I reckon I'm smart enough ter carry this thing through."

"You bet yer are, cap!" exclaimed Rolly.

"S'pose we chuck ther dice now fur ther two gals?" suggested Mike. "It will settle it right on ther start, an' it'll make ther winners work harder ter git hold of 'em."

"I reckon that would be a good idea," spoke up another of the villains.

"All right, then," nodded the captain. "Just throw fur first choice, an' then ther winner drops out an' ther rest throws fur ther one that's left."

One of the men quickly produced three dice and a leather cup.

The table was soon surrounded by the Dangerous Gang, and then the leader told Mike to lead off, since he was the one who proposed it.

Mike rolled out a pretty good throw.

The spots on the three dice counted fourteen, and as eighteen was the highest that could be got, he felt hopeful.

But there were seven men to throw against him, and he waited with interest as the throwing proceeded.

It so happened that no one beat him, or even tied him, though one man came within one of doing it.

"I wins!" the villain cried, jubilantly. "I'll take ther dark-haired gal fur mine—ther younger one of ther two, I mean."

"All right," said Captain Danger. "Now the rest can throw for ther last one of ther three, which is married to Cheyenne Charlie, so I heard. She'll have ter be a widder before ther winner kin marry her, though. Ha, ha, ha!"

They all laughed, for they thought the leader was capable of saying very smart things, and this was considered to be one of them.

The dice was thrown again, and a man named Sawyer was the winner.

"Shake, Mike!" he exclaimed, as he seized the hand of the other winner.

"Now you two galoots has got ter work hard ter git them gals, since you're ter marry 'em when yer git 'em," said the captain.

"That's right; an' I'll be ther parson," spoke up Rolly, who did not show any great disappointment.

The Dangerous Gang certainly was good at scheming, but the carrying out of the plans was the next thing.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOP JUST ESCAPES BEING ROBBED.

Young Wild West heard every word that was spoken by the villains in the shanty.

It was the second time that he had successfully spied upon them and learned their plans, and he laughed softly to himself, as he heard them leaving the shanty after the conference and raffle that took place at its conclusion.

"They are about the worst lot of schemers I ever heard," was his inward comment. "There is not enough common sense among the whole nine of them to make one intelligent man. But they seem to think that everything is going to run their way, just because they want it to. So they mean to divide their time between the mining camp and the cave, do they? Well, I reckon I'll have to set a trap here, then, for they will make this shanty their headquarters when they are in Glitter Gulch. A double trap will surely catch the Dangerous Gang. I like to surprise villains, and I'll bet they will be surprised greatly before long."

All the men left the shanty but two, and it was easy for Wild to listen and find out that they were the captain and Rolly.

But he did not want to hear anything further just then.

It was dinner time, so he concluded to go to the tavern and let his partners know what was up.

Then, when the shanty was again empty, they would come back and set the trap he had in mind.

Our hero was not long in getting back to the tavern.

As he came in by the back way he heard Hop singing and dancing in the barroom.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "So Hop has started on a little spree, has he? Well, he had better drop on it, I reckon. I'll just see what is going on in there, for it is quite likely that Charlie and Jim are there."

He walked in and found his supposition to be correct.

Both the scout and Dart were there, and they were apparently enjoying what was taking place.

Hop was dancing about the room, a fancy paper parasol hoisted over his head and what appeared to be a live rattlesnake hanging from his mouth by the tail.

There was quite a crowd in the room, among which were three of the Dangerous Gang, who had dropped over that way to find out what they could.

Two of the latter were Mike and Sawyer, the winners of the girls in the raffle.

The inmates of the barroom were giving the Chinaman wide berth as he danced around, with the snake hanging from his mouth.

But if they had known that the snake was made of rubber they would not have been much alarmed.

It was evident that Hop knew that the three men were members of the Dangerous Gang, for he seemed to have a sort of pick on them.

He made it a point to get as near them as he could every now and then, and he would manage to hit them with the wriggling snake, which kept in motion through his own movements.

"Me allee samee bully boy with um glassy eye!" he shouted through his teeth.

Just then he saw Young Wild West.

The snake quickly disappeared under his coat, and then he closed the parasol and proceeded to eat it up.

When it had disappeared he bowed to our hero, and said:

"Me allee samee havee lillee fun, Mislér Wild."

"I see you are," was the reply. "But just quit drinking for the day, do you hear? I may want you to give a little performance here to-night, and I want you to be perfectly sober."

"Allee light, Mislér Wild," was the meek reply.

It so happened that Mike was one of the men who had played in the game at the shanty the night before, and it occurred to him that if he followed the Chinaman when he went out he might have a chance to get hold of his money.

But he did not much like to bother with a person who carried a live snake about and ate up parasols.

Still, he thought it worth trying, so when Hop went out by the back way he walked casually out at the front.

His companions knew what he was up to, of course, but they remained inside to watch our friends.

However, our hero had an idea that the villain had gone out to follow Hop, and, knowing that the Chinaman would most likely go to the stable, he thought it would be a good idea to send Charlie out.

He managed to whisper to the scout, and the result was that he promptly started for the door, saying:

"I'm goin' over to ther store, Wild. 'I'll be back in about five minutes. I want ter git some cartridges, 'cause I reckon we'll have ter use quite a few afore we leave Glitter Gulch."

This was meant for the two villains in the company, and they took it, too.

Charlie went out, but instead of making in the direction of the store he went around back.

He was just in time to see Mike sneaking along a fringe of bushes for the stable, and as he turned his gaze to the latter place he saw Hop going in.

Charlie got behind the fringe of bushes and hurried to the spot.

When he got where he had seen the villain the latter was just going to enter the door that Hop had passed through but a few seconds before.

Charlie gave him time to get in, and then, revolver in hand, he ran swiftly for the spot.

As he reached the doorway a cry of alarm rang out.

It was the voice of Hop.

"Shet your trap!" came from the man who had fol-

lowed him there. "You jest keep still! If yer holler agin' it will be ther death of yer!"

Biff!

Cheyenne Charlie got near enough without being discovered and he delivered a blow that sent the man to the ground on his face.

Knowing that Wild had planned to catch the members of the Dangerous Gang in a trap, Charlie did not make the man a prisoner.

He assisted him to his feet, knocked the revolver out of his hand that had been used to frighten the Chinaman with, and then sent him out of the stable, with a good, hard kick.

"You ain't goin' ter rob that heathen, you measly coyote!" he exclaimed. "Now light out as fast as yer kin go, or I'll let daylight through your ugly carcass!"

Mike never stopped for anything.

He quickly gathered himself together and ran like the wind.

He thought his life depended on it, and he lost no time.

Charlie set up a sprint after him, leaving Hop staring at him in amazement.

As Mike ran around in front of the tavern there were several men on the stoop.

"Whoopee!" yelled the scout, as he came in view. "Look at ther thievin' galoot go! He was tryin' ter rob ther Chinees, an' I stopped him. Look at him go!"

Then, to make him put on a faster gait, if possible, Charlie sent a bullet a couple of feet over the rascal's head.

Some of the miners laughed, and others looked surprised.

But Hop came around just then, and he quickly told how he had been surprised by the man.

"I'll explain it, boys," spoke up Wild. "Last night Hop got in a poker game with some of Captain Danger's gang, and he got a little the best of it. That fellow was one of them, I reckon, and he wanted to get his money back, and a little more, too. He showed a pretty good nerve to follow Hop into the stable and threaten to shoot him, didn't he?"

"Ther galoot ought ter be lynched!" exclaimed one of the miners.

"No, boys. Leave him alone for the present. If he happens to be proved as a very bad man—one who would shoot a man for his money—then you can deal with him. But just let him alone for the present."

The other two men belonging to the Dangerous Gang heard all that was said, and they showed themselves to be very uneasy.

But neither Wild nor his partners bothered with them. It was past dinner time now, and the meal was waiting for them.

The three went in and ate heartily.

Jake Murray was a boarder at the tavern, and when Wild told him that he was going to down the Dangerous Gang before they were many hours older he nodded approvingly.

Our hero thought it would be well to tell him just what was on the carpet, excepting that he knew that Captain

Danger and Rolly were the villains who had held up the stage coach and killed and robbed the unlucky passenger.

He hinted it to him, however, and made him promise to keep quiet on the subject for a while.

"Are you going to do anything particular this afternoon?" he asked Murray, as the latter arose from the table.

"No; I haven't anything of importance to attend to," was the reply. "Why?"

"Well, you can help me out, if you will."

"Just tell me how, and I'll be mighty glad to do it."

"I want you to help me set a trap for the Dangerous Gang. I have made up my mind to give them a surprise."

"All right. I'm with you. Just wait till I run over to the mine and leave some instructions, and I'll be right with you."

"Good! On your way back just find out whether the shanty belonging to Rolly is occupied or not."

"I'll do that."

This conversation was carried on in private, of course, for our hero did not want to let any one know what he was up to.

His idea was to trap the villains, and then expose them in their true light, and unless something happened he was going to do it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DOUBLE TRAP.

Jake Murray was not long in returning from the mine.

He was eager to join in with Young Wild West in downing the Dangerous Gang, and he was perfectly willing to do just as the boy said.

"Ther shanty's empty an' ther door's ajar," he reported.

"All right. Now I want a saw and some rope."

"I'll furnish 'em."

"Get them, and we'll meet you at the shanty."

In less than twenty minutes the four were behind the shanty.

Wild had warned the girls not to go out of the tavern, for he did not want to give the villains the least bit of a chance to try and carry out their foul plans.

Leaving Jim to watch for the approach of any of the scoundrels, Wild, Charlie and Murray descended into the cellar.

The mine boss was very much surprised to find that there was a cellar there, but when he found out what our hero intended to do he grinned.

It was Wild's idea to saw enough boards to make a sort of trap, which could be lowered by a smart pull on a rope.

This was to be used after the trap had been sprung at the cave, for it was hardly likely that all of the villains would gather there at one time.

Our hero got right at work, and, with the help of Charlie and Murray, he soon had the flooring sawed along about four feet from the door.

That part that was nailed to the sill was then loosened and a couple of battens nailed across the boards.

It was tried and found to work readily, so a cleat was nailed to hold it, which worked on a swivel plan, and the rope they had brought was tied to this.

The rope was passed through the cellar to the pile of hay back of the shanty.

"Now, then," said our hero, "if we don't catch all the scoundrels in the cave we will catch what is left here. It is a double trap I have set, so if one don't work just right the other will."

"That's right," and Murray smiled. "I see ther point. You could catch the galoots just as well without the double trap you have set; but you want to show them that they don't know enough to go in when it rains. You want to let them know all of a sudden that you've been on to their game all the time. It's a bully idea, that's what it is. I want to be around when ther traps are sprung."

"You can be around. We'll see to that."

It certainly was a novel idea that Wild had put in effect.

He carried it out just because he liked the fun of it, for it was an old thing to get a crowd together and catch a gang of villains, and then denounce them for what they were.

Our hero liked to do things in various ways, and his double trap was something entirely new.

The trap all arranged, they left the cellar, and, covering the hole with the hay, ventured around to the front.

Jim was on the watch not far away, and when he signalled that everything was all right they went inside.

The boards showed where the sawing had been done, but all they had to do was to pull an old piece of bagging that was used in the capacity of a rug over it.

If the villains did not take this up, or move it further from the door, they would not discover what had been done.

"Now to wait developments," said our hero.

They all went back to the tavern.

It was the middle of the afternoon now, and when they saw two men riding out of the camp, carrying bags on their horses, they looked at each other and nodded.

The two men were Captain Danger and Rolly.

"They are going to the cave with some of the furnishings," said our hero. "Murray, if you want to do a little spying on them, and find out that what I have told you is absolutely correct, you can go with Charlie and watch them."

"I would like to do it," was the reply.

"All right. Is it a go, Charlie?"

"Sartin," was the reply.

"Well, don't let them see you."

"Leave that ter me, Wild."

"I'll have to go and get my horse," said Murray.

"You haven't time for that. Take mine," spoke up Jim.

This was very satisfactory to the mine boss, so a few minutes later he rode off with the scout.

Wild and Jim went inside the barroom, and they were not a little surprised when they found Hop there again.

He was engaged in playing euchre with two miners.

The game had just started, and when Wild saw that, to all appearances, Hop had not been drinking any more, he decided to let him go ahead.

"What are you playing for, Hop?" our hero asked, as he took a seat near the table.

"Five dollee," was the reply. "Me no knowee how playee euchre velly muchee, but me makee pleasant for um Melican mans, so be. Me no care if me losee lillie money; me win plenty last night, so be."

The two miners grinned, thinking they had struck an easy proposition in the innocent-looking Chinaman.

The score stood, Hop three points and each of the miners two when Wild became a spectator.

It was Hop's deal.

He gave the players their cards and himself, as well, and then turned up the ace of hearts.

The man on his left looked at his hand and found that he had the right and left bower and the ten-pot of trumps.

The other two cards were the ace of clubs and king of diamonds.

It was a pretty good hand, so he promptly ordered it up.

Hop smiled.

"Me gottee velly goodee hand," he observed, as he picked up the ace.

He did have a good hand, too, for he held the ace, king, queen and nine of hearts, and the ace of diamonds.

The other man had no trumps whatever, so he could do nothing toward taking a trick.

The miner who had ordered up the trump led the ace of clubs.

Hop trumped it with his nine-spot and scooped in the trick.

But the miner did not seem to be alarmed any.

He still had both bowers and the ten, and he wanted to use the ten to take a trick.

Hop came back with his ace, and it was taken with the miner's left bower.

Then the miner led his king of diamonds, and Hop took it with his ace of the same suit.

The miner began to look a bit worried.

"I reckon I'm only here fur a figurehead," remarked the third player. "You two has got all ther trumps an' aces."

"You havee pletty nicee hand next timee," Hop answered, as he led his king of trumps.

The miner had to use his right bower to take the trick, and that left him with the ten-spot to get the third trick.

He led it back, and when Hop put the queen on it he exclaimed:

"That beats all! I would have bet that I had a sure point that time. An' it was my lead, too."

Hop and the other miner each took two points from the euchre.

The cards were dealt by the euchred miner, and the other man ordered it up.

Spades were trumps this time, and when he saw that he had both bowers Hop wondered where the man was going to land to.

Of course, if the other player could not take a trick he would go through, as Hop's side cards were rather small.

But it happened that the other man did take a trick, for he trumped the ace of clubs that was led.

That made Hop's score seven and the miners four apiece.

The next deal the dealer made one, and then it came Hop's turn again.

It required three points to make him win the game, and he meant to make them that time.

He cleverly dealt himself four of the highest hearts and then turned up the nine-spot.

Both men passed, as might be supposed, and when he picked up the nine-spot Hop had five trumps.

He scored the three points in a hurry, and then one of the miners proposed that they play for fifty dollars.

"No," said Wild, speaking up, "don't you fellows play any more with him. He's a professional card sharp and he would soon clean you out of all you have got. Hop, give them back the money you iust won, and quit the game."

CHAPTER XV.

NARROWING TO THE CLOSE.

The miners were not satisfied to take back their money and quit playing.

"I don't care how much of a professional ther heathen is," said the one who claimed to be such an expert at the game of euchre. "I never yet seen ther man what could beat me two out of three games. I'll play him three games, single-handed, fur fifty dollars a game."

"An' I'll bet yer a hundred dollars that yer lose all three of 'em!" spoke up Jim Dart.

"I'll take that bet."

"Me likee play, Mislir Wild?" said Hop, pleadingly.

"All right; go ahead, then. When a man won't take good advice he ought to be able to look out for himself."

"I'll bet you a hundred I win," said the miner to Hop.

"Me takee um bet."

The money was put up, and then all the inmates of the room gathered about the table to watch the game, which was one of the queerest ever played there—or, rather, the odds were.

Hop won the deal and made two at the start.

Then the miner dealt, picked up the trump and was euchred.

Hop dealt and made two more.

Then his opponent made one.

Again Hop made two.

The score was now eight to one.

The miner dealt and made another point, and then Hop went out on his own deal, taking every trick and scoring the necessary two points.

The game was played in a hurry, for Hop invariably made two on his own deal, and he euchred the man twice in succession.

He allowed him to make a point, and then he dealt himself five trumps and turned up the sixth.

He won, just as he said he would, and the miner, who claimed that no man could beat him two games out of three, looked sick.

But he still had a chance of saving something by winning the third game, so he started in to deal.

"You no gittee one lilee point lis timee," said Hop, smiling at him. "You no knowee how play um euchre, so be."

"I'll bet yer all ther money I've got that I make a point," was the reply.

The man fished out a little over three hundred dollars and Hop calmly covered it.

Then the game started, no one saying a word that might interfere with it.

It was two points every time he dealt, and a euchre for his opponent every time he dealt, for Hop, and the game was played in short order.

"Skunked, by jingo!" exclaimed the defeated miner, as he arose from the table. "An' I'm cleaned out of every dollar I've got! Serves me right, too!"

"Well, that's what you get for not taking a little friendly advice," said Wild. "I told you, didn't I?"

"Yer sartinly did. But I ain't goin' ter squeal. Ther heathen beat me, an' I didn't catch him cheatin', either. If he did it, it is all right. If he didn't cheat he's ther luckiest galoot I ever met, that's all."

"Well, I guess he did cheat a whole lot. But you were not smart enough to catch him. Hop, give the man back every dollar you have taken from him."

"An' here's your hundred that you was fool enough ter bet," added Jim Dart, as he tendered the money to him. "I don't want ter take a man's money when I know he's up ag'in a card sharp that can't be beat by ther best of 'em."

Hop's victim took the money and called for the best there was in the house for all hands.

Hop drank with them and our three friends smoked.

Then the Chinaman picked up the cards and dealt out five for his late victim and five for himself.

"You looker at your hand, so be," he said.

He did so.

He had what is termed a straight flush in hearts.

"You looker velly muchee sharpee, so be?" asked Hop, as he saw the man look over the cards and smile.

"Yes, I reckon I'd know 'em ag'in if I seen 'em."

"Allee light; you puttee all together and lay down on um table, so be."

This was done, after the cards had been shown to those who stood behind the miner.

Hop picked up the five cards and shuffled them over.

Then he laid them down.

"Me tellee whatee um cards are, and me no looker," he said.

"Well, what is ther hand, then?"

"Allee samee spadee flush."

"No, they ain't."

"Whatee you say ley are, so be?"

"They're all hearts."

Hop shook his head.

"You looker some more," he suggested.

The miner picked up the five cards and looked at them.

Then it was that his jaw dropped.

He turned them over on the table and allowed the rest to see them.

"Ther heathen has changed ther spots!" he exclaimed.

Those who had seen the five cards were as much mystified as the man himself.

"Now you see what you was up against," said Wild, with a laugh. "Any one who can change hearts to spades is a pretty sharp card player, I reckon."

"Great cats! I should say so!"

Hop did some more mystifying tricks with the cards after that, and the afternoon slipped away.

At length Charlie and Murray came back.

Wild and Jim went out to the stable and had a talk with them.

"Well, how did you make out?" he asked.

"Fine!" declared the mine boss. "I seen an' heard enough ter prove everything you said. We heard 'em talkin' about what they mean ter do to-night. They're goin' ter set ther tavern on fire, an' then git ther gals an' light out fur ther cave. That is, all but Captain Danger an' Rolly is goin' ter. They're goin' ter stay right here in ther camp, so they won't be s'pected of bein' in ther game."

"They're goin' ter carry over ther stuff they want ter git there right after dark," said Charlie. "I reckon some of us had better foller 'em up an' spring ther cave trap on 'em."

"Are they all going over right after dark?" asked our hero.

"No; all but ther captain an' ther galoot they calls Rolly."

"All right. We'll follow them up, and when they get in the cave we'll give them a scare, so they will trap themselves. Be ready, Mr. Murray."

"You bet I will!" was the reply. "I want to see Captain Danger an' Rolly swing fur ther murder of ther man to-day. But I'll wait till you have sprung your double trap."

Wild knew it was going to be no easy matter to keep the business quiet, for already Murray had told enough to some of the mine men to cause whisperings around the camp.

If the Dangerous Gang did not catch on it would be all right.

The sun was just going down when our friends got up from the supper table at the tavern and went out.

Wild suggested that they take a walk over to Fatty Bill's saloon, and they did so.

When they got there they found that not one of the Dangerous Gang was there.

Our friends looked at each other significantly.

They easily guessed that the villains were getting ready to make their pilgrimage to the cave.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Wild remained there until after dark.

Then he went out and took a look around.

"Boys," said he, "I guess the galoots have gone. Jim, you go and find out, will you?"

Jim came back in a few minutes and reported that all of the nine villains had just rode off, loaded with what they could carry on their horses with them.

"They went around another way, so we can easily get there as soon as they do," he said.

"Come on, then," our hero spoke up.

The four mounted and rode slowly out upon the trail.

When they neared the narrow cut they heard the sounds made by horses, and they just had time to get behind a clump of trees when the gang came along.

Allowing them time to get to the cave, they then followed, and when near it they brought their horses to a halt.

"Now," said Wild, "we must hide the horses and watch. I hardly believe that Captain Danger and Rolly will stay very long, if what you found out, Charlie, is right."

They hid themselves and waited.

In less than ten minutes two horsemen appeared.

They were the captain and his lieutenant.

When they had gone past the four came out of the hiding place.

"Give them plenty of time to get out of hearing," said Wild.

This they did, for the two villains must have reached the mining camp when Wild announced that it was time to spring the first trap.

Creeping up, so they would not be in danger of being hit, in case the villains fired at them, they got ready to let out a combined yell.

When he was ready Wild threw up his hand and they all yelled at the top of their voices, giving the old cowboy shout.

Crack—crack!

Wild fired two shots from his revolver, and then held up his hand for silence.

There was a short interval and then there was a grinding, crashing sound, followed by a thud that fairly shook the ground.

"The trap has been sprung, boys," said Young Wild West, as he walked out to have a look. "That settles the cave part of it for the present. Now to see that everything is all right, and then we'll go back to Glitter Gulch and let the other one go."

"Hello, in there!" our hero called out.

"Hello!" came the reply, in the voice of Mike.

"I just want to tell you that I have downed you, that's all," said Wild. "How do you like it? I'll send a vigilance committee after you by and by. We are not going to have any road agents around these diggings!"

Then there was a short silence and the trapped villains began begging for mercy.

But Young Wild West and his friends turned away from them.

Mounting their horses, they rode back to the mining camp.

Once there Wild gave it out that seven of the gang of villains belonging to the road agents' band had been captured, and were in a cave, waiting to be taken care of.

As might be supposed, a party was organized at once,

and after our hero had explained how he had located the cave that day and set the trap for them, they rode off.

Meanwhile Jim Dart was keeping a watch for Captain Danger and Rolly to leave the saloon.

When he saw them leave he called Jake Murray and told him to get in conversation with them, and to hold them until Wild and the rest could get to the shanty.

"Then you can let them come on over, and you follow them and watch from the outside what takes place," he added.

The mine boss fell right into the scheme, and he succeeded in doing his part admirably.

Meanwhile Wild, Charlie and Jim hurried and got into the cellar under the shanty.

They had not been there long when they heard footsteps outside approaching the door.

Wild had hold of the rope, and the moment he saw the trap door sink a little with the weight of a man he gave a sharp pull.

Down came Rolly, landing in a heap on the ground, bringing with him a cloud of dust.

Charlie and Jim quickly grabbed him and prevented him from making an outcry.

For some reason Rolly had come to the shanty ahead of the captain.

But the latter was right there now, and by the time Charlie and Jim had bound and gagged him, and Wild had pushed back the door, he was on the threshold.

Then came the last move in the double-trap business.

There was a sudden click and then the trap door opened.

Down came the leader of the Dangerous Gang, yelling with fear and astonishment.

"I guess we've got you, all right, Captain Danger!" exclaimed Young Wild West.

The villain was quickly captured, and then both of them were led out of the cellar.

By this time the mining camp was in an uproar.

Murray quickly gave it out that Captain Danger and Rolly were the ones who had murdered the stage coach passenger, and then lynching was in order.

But we do not mean to dwell upon such scenes, so suffice it to say that the rest of the gang were taken from the cave and treated accordingly.

Young Wild West and his friends left Glitter Gulch a day or two after that, and when they did so they left behind them a good, clean mining camp.

"Now for the next adventure," said Arietta.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST AFTER THE MEXICAN RAIDERS; or, ARIETTA ON A HOT TRAIL," which will be the next number (286) of "Wild West Weekly."

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SOME GOOD ARTICLES.

Calcutta boasts of bathing ghats, or pavilions, that are as popular among the natives as our own Coney Island. In the accompanying illustration one of the largest bathing ghats, located on the Hooghly River, with Calcutta in the distance, is seen crowded with bathers, many of whose costumes are abbreviated to such an extent that they no doubt would be excluded at Manhattan Beach. Numerous ghats line the shore opposite Calcutta and, besides the bathing feature, the neighborhood for a great distance is made attractive by amusement places similar to those at Coney Island.

There was great rejoicing in the New Brooklyn Church in Sicklerville, N. J., when the last dollar of the debt against the parsonage was paid. The money was raised in a novel manner. Every female member of the church wrote a letter to all the boys that were her schoolmates in bygone days, no matter where they now lived, soliciting contributions. The men members likewise wrote to their schoolgirl sweethearts of long ago. Many a pleasant correspondence developed, and it is said some of the letters were calculated to revive the spark of affection that was kindled when the writers were youngsters, but as husbands and wives were allowed to read one another's letters not a case of jealousy is recorded. The money came in so fast that in a short time the entire debt was paid off, and as the contributions are still coming in the parsonage will be brightened by a new coat of paint.

There are no religious differences, no arguments nor unpleasant altercations in the little plot of ground in which the baptized and the unbaptized red men of the West lie side by side. This cemetery, small as it is, holds all that remains of many Indian chiefs and their followers who were converted to Christianity before passing away. And with them lie brothers and other braves who died without knowing anything of the faith. The graveyard marks the height of civilization in the West, as evidenced in the method of burial. In the tiny enclosed plots are many graves made in the ordinary way of the country and decorated with suitable tombstones. Close by, too, are mounds which hold the bodies of unconverted chiefs. These are barbaric in every way, and, in arranging them, all the curious practices and traditions of the race have been carefully observed.

A millionaire hermit, who, a very few years ago, died in Moscow, was C. G. Solodovnikoff, who had made a fortune variously estimated at from twenty to fifty millions by colossal speculations on the Bourse. So many and varied were his investments that it was said the handling of coupons alone gave employment to ten girls. And yet this lord of millions, who might have rivaled kings in the splendor of his palaces, lived for years in a tumble-down, two-story cottage, surrounded by sordid and rotting furniture. For weeks together

he never put his head outside his front door, and he spent half his time in his dressing-gown. When his will was opened, it was found that he had left the whole of his stupendous fortune for philanthropic purposes, from building schools for girls to providing cheap lodgings for the working classes.

Illustration of the wonderful strength of growing vegetable matter is afforded in a forceful manner by a mushroom brought to the office of the Indianapolis (Ind.) News by T. J. Trusler. The mushroom, which is of the edible kind, grew under the asphalt pavement of the Middle Drive. Its strength in growing was sufficient to bulge up the pavement for a radius of more than two inches and finally to break off the hump of asphalt. Imbedded like a cap in the centre of the mass of asphalt is the pileus of the mushroom. This is perfectly formed. The stipe or stem is slender and only slightly bent. The circular piece of asphalt displaced is about four inches in diameter and about an inch and a half thick. The surface is filled with seams and cracks, showing that the asphalt gave way slowly under the gradually increasing pressure of the mushroom beneath.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES.

Jonathan—I say, Britisher, can you spell horse? Englishman—'Orse? Why, certainly. It honly takes a haitch and a ho and a har and a hess and a he to spell 'orse.

Grace—And did you ever propose to a girl in a canoe? Fred—Yes; and I'll never do it again. The girl jumped at my proposal and upset the boat.

"Frisbie and Thornton are not friends any more," said Bloobumper to Spatts. "Why, they used to swear by each other." "Well, now they swear at each other."

Old Lady—Isn't something being done for that ship in distress? Coast Guard—It's all right, mum. We've sent 'em a line to come ashore. Old Lady—Good gracious! Were they waiting for a formal invitation?

"Is your son proficient in any foreign languages?" "Well," answered Farmer Cornfossel, "I dunno as he's much on French or German; but he kin understand every word of the baseball news."

Mrs. Malaprop—Did you hear about that poor man's accident while shavin'? It was an awful cat's throe. Mrs. Browne (laughing)—An awful what? Mrs. Malaprop—Oh! it ain't no laughin' matter. He cut his jocular vein.

"You!" snorted the rich old man, "you marry my daughter? Why, you're a beer-guzzler, sir!" "Yes," replied Nervey, "but after my marriage I'd stop all that. I expect to be able to afford wine then."

"Excuse me for butting in," said the goat to the comic editor, "but I wanted to set you right. Don't be a nature faker." "What's the matter?" "I have made careful inquiry," replied the visitor, "and have found no evidence that any goat ever nibbled a tin-can or other metallic substance." "Much obliged." "Oh, not at all; but you might let me have a supplement or two, I haven't dined yet."

The reporter of a big London daily was interviewing a Crimean veteran in Chelsea Hospital the other day. "I see the trace of a scar along your left cheek, sir," said the newsman. "That must have an interesting history." "Oh, I don't know," said the modest warrior. "How did you get it?" "Well, you see," replied the old man, "after I had run about a mile I got kind of careless and looked back."

TRAILING A BLACK VALISE.

By KIT CLYDE.

An ordinary valise, of ordinary black leather, would not, under ordinary circumstances, seem likely to excite the special cupidity of anybody.

But a valise believed to be stuffed with government bonds and railroad stocks presents a different and more tempting aspect.

And the valise, the incidents of the theft of which I am about to relate, contained not only securities of the sort mentioned, but also a handsome amount in ready money.

It was the property of a Mr. Caslin Isdall, a gentleman who had accumulated a fine fortune in a commercial line, but who had retired from active business, and resided in a substantial country house a short distance up the Hudson.

The account of the theft was narrated to me by the gentleman himself upon the very day of its committal, as he had come to me at once and employed my services in the case.

He had taken the bonds and stocks that morning from a friend; after the business transaction had been arranged, he had cashed some coupons of his own; immediately afterward he had proceeded to the Forty-second street depot.

He had always considered the old black valise as quite safe for the carrying of money and papers.

It was a shabby article, not at all likely to attract notice, and he was accustomed to use it for the purpose.

There was a crowd of excursionists about him as he approached the ticket window; for once he had neglected his invariable habit of having the exact change ready; in the delay of fumbling for the correct amount he placed the valise for a second on the ledge beside him.

He had hardly done so when a hand and arm were projected forward as swiftly and indistinctly as a shadow, and the valise had disappeared.

The singular theft had been committed with such extraordinary rapidity and dexterity that he scarcely realized he had been robbed before the bold and cunning perpetrator was swallowed up in the crowd of excursionists.

Indeed, the thief had shown such marvelous celerity that Mr. Isdall had not even time to decide whether the arm and hand were those of a man or of a woman.

"It was done in a wink," he said to me; "it was done so quickly that not one of a score of people pressing upon me observed anything unusual. They stared as if they thought I had suddenly gone stark, raving mad when I wheeled and called out that I had been robbed."

I could not help smiling at the injured expression of the venerable old gentleman's countenance as he spoke.

"And when I explained to an officer what had occurred, he had the impertinence to hint that perhaps I had taken a glass too much; that no man in his senses would carry a bank-vault around in a shabby old valise anyhow," Mr. Isdall continued so lugubriously that I laughed outright.

"Who was present when you transacted the business with your friend, or witnessed the cashing of the coupons? Or who was likely to know what was in the valise?"

"You think I had been followed from the time my business was finished?"

"Possibly."

"I can think of no one who would have been likely to follow me."

"And of no one who knew you carried a small fortune in a shabby black leather bag? Think again!"

"Well, there is Wat McElroy—the young clerk in my friend's office! He knew, of course!"

"What kind of a fellow is he—above suspicion?"

"Well, now I come to think of it, I believe he is the man—the very man," said the old gentleman, bringing one clenched hand down with an emphatic thud upon my desk.

The remainder of our conversation was comparatively unimportant.

And altogether there was nothing which I could regard as much of a clew in the singular case.

I was pretty certain Caslin Isdall had been followed and robbed by somebody who was familiar with his habits and business relations, but beyond that I could not perceive the glimmer of a trail.

My first move was to satisfy myself as to the reputation borne by Walter McElroy.

"Watty will take care of number one," "He is as keen as a brier," "He is a wonderful fine fellow," "Honest as the sun," "bound to get up in the world," "his ambition to get up in the world, and to get up fast, may be his downfall," were among the various things I heard said of him.

I managed to get an interview with him without his suspecting my purpose or who I was.

What I saw was a shortish, stoutish, olive-skinned, ruddy-cheeked youth of not more than two-and-twenty.

"Why, I have met you before! Ah, I remember! Didn't I see you at the Forty-second street depot yesterday?" I remarked.

"Why?"

The single word came sharp as a bullet from his lips; there was a quick flash from his bright eyes—fearless eyes, as big and brown as those of a gypsy.

"Why? I can't say—only I have a trick of remembering every face I have once seen. Didn't I see you?" I persisted.

"I was there about noon. I had an appointment."

He answered with more defiance than willingness, it appeared to me.

I made a note of the fact; I felt I had scored a point.

The young fellow admitted he was there—on the scene of the theft—and at the very time when the theft had been accomplished! The admission seemed to bring me a step nearer to the trail.

But it was one of those peculiarly mysterious cases which may require months of patient investigation before any really conclusive evidence may be detected; and therefore I did not feel particularly elated by what I had learned.

The true detective, like the ardent huntsman, has a wholesome distaste for anything like a false scent.

And I was not by any means convinced that young Watty McElroy was the guilty party. Indeed, his entire manner impressed me as directly the reverse.

I left him to board a surface car for the Forty-second street depot.

What I learned there might be material or immaterial—I could not decide which at the moment.

A cabman—one whom I knew and whom I had once befriended in such a fashion that he would hardly dare any attempt at deception with me—distinctly recalled having his vehicle taken by an individual whose excited demeanor had aroused his curiosity.

This had happened about noon—just at the time when Mr. Isdall had aroused a commotion with the outcry that he had been robbed.

The cabman had a clear recollection of the young gentleman who had hailed his vehicle.

He was fashionably dressed, and of a rather foppish appearance, and had been accompanied by a girl, plainly attired, who was possibly a servant and unmistakably from the country.

The young gentleman had helped the girl into the cab, and then walked hurriedly away.

The girl had carried a small valise of shabby black leather, fastened by a large and peculiarly shaped lock-clasp of brass.

The cabman had given me a clear description of the strange couple, and also the number and street to which he had driven the girl.

The description was that of a young man of medium size, neither thin nor stout, with dark skin and black hair. He might be young McElroy and he might not.

I left the depot and proceeded to the address the cabman had scrawled on a fragment of note paper.

It was nearly dark when I reached the house—a three-storied brick building, the last of a row all exactly alike.

My astonishment may be imagined when I ascended the steps only to perceive that the house was empty.

By a few inquiries in the neighborhood I learned that the house had been vacant for some time. The row was the property of a miserly and generally disliked old lady, who resided somewhere north of the city. Her nephew—a wild young fellow, known as Dimon Dayne—had been noticed about the empty building the previous evening.

At the mention of that name I started. Dimon Dayne was a frequent visitor at the Isdall mansion, and was regarded as a favored suitor for the hand of Miss Florence, the venerable old gentleman's only daughter.

The mystery of the black valise seemed to be more impenetrable than before.

But I had determined to inspect the interior of the house, and I at once proceeded to effect an entrance.

To do this was comparatively easy. I had only to force the already broken panel of a basement shutter; the blade of my pocket-knife slipped between the sashes, turned the window-hasp aside; then I had only to throw up the lower sash and step into what had been used as a dining-room.

My next proceeding was to light the stump of a wax candle. I chanced to have in one of my pockets, as it was already nightfall, and pitchy dark inside.

I ascended to the upper floors, seeing nothing and hearing nothing.

But my adventure had only begun.

As I descended again to the parlor floor, I noticed a dark object on the floor of the back apartment, which I had not yet closely inspected.

What I picked up was a woman's veil—a cheap affair, of coarse, brown silk tissue—and with it a crumpled note written in a man's hurried hand.

"I have written the directions so you will make no mistake," I read.

Then followed minute instructions how the recipient of the note was to reach a certain obscure railway station, what train to take, and at what hour the writer might be expected there.

"And now, Ella, I trust you to bring the black valise if anything occurs to prevent my coming for it. It will be safe enough in the empty house until you are ready to start."

So the black valise had actually been hidden in the house—perhaps in that very room!

As the thought flashed upon my brain, my eyes fell upon a loose pile of rubbish in one corner, and an ejaculation fell from my lips.

There was the black valise before my very sight, only half-concealed by the loose fragments of worn carpeting, and odds and ends such as are usually left after the removal of a tenant.

In an instant I had it in my grasp.

But at that instant there were stealthy footsteps behind me; a shadow seemed to glide beside me, and before I could turn or move a muscle a figure hurled itself upon me, and I was felled to the floor.

Of course, I was totally unprepared for an attack of that

kind, or the sudden assault would hardly have overpowered me.

As it was, the valise was snatched from my hands. I had one glimpse of a dark-skinned face, livid with fear and passion. I was conscious of the scoundrel's excited retreat, and then I knew no more.

In my fall my forehead had struck heavily against the point of the iron mantelpiece, and insensibility was produced by a wound which, less than an inch lower, would have resulted in instant death.

It was broad daylight when I recovered my senses.

I glanced at my watch.

It lacked three hours yet of the time appointed for the girl Ella to arrive at the obscure railway station designated in the note.

Weak as I was, I resolved to undertake the trip.

It is needless to say I lost no time in that painful and anxious three hours' journey.

I left the train, made a little detour of the station building, and then strolled up to the platform.

There were but few passengers in the waiting-room, and no one who resembled the description of the two I sought. Outside several others were standing in groups or walking idly about, but among them I could not detect the fashionably-dressed young gentleman and the unfashionably attired girl for whom I was searching.

I had reached the farther angle of the platform, where was a sheltered and secluded seat, when I started and stopped.

At a few paces distant I beheld the dark-skinned, pallid-faced individual whose tiger spring had felled me the previous night.

He was in close conversation with an honest-featured rustic, and as I drew a step nearer I espied a girl whom I at once decided was the "Ella" of the note.

I had not arrived too late; my prisoners were within my reach.

"The valise must be delivered to Walter McElroy; it must be seen by nobody but him," the young man was saying.

I stepped across the space between us, and had an iron grip upon him so suddenly that any resistance would have been useless.

"I will take charge of the black valise, Dimon Dayne," I said. "Your plot to fix your own guilt upon an innocent man has failed."

I had slipped handcuffs over his wrists, and had unguardedly loosened my grip upon him as I turned to the girl Ella.

At that moment a train came thundering down the track; Dayne uttered a terrible sound, and before I could suspect his purpose he had wrenched himself away from me, leaped down to the rails and flung himself directly beneath the wheels.

Suicide had robbed justice of her vengeance.

There is little to be explained. Dimon Dayne had been a polished scoundrel all his life. The girl Ella was innocent of any complicity in the theft of the black valise; she loved him, and she had simply obeyed his instructions. His awful death and the knowledge of his crimes unsettled her reason, and she was committed to an insane asylum.

Dayne had planned the disgrace of Walter McElroy simply because that handsome and manly young fellow had supplanted him in the affections of Mr. Isdall's beautiful daughter Florence.

Mr. Isdall had objected to the young clerk's attentions to his daughter, but after the disclosure of Dimon Dayne's villainy he withdrew his objections.

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